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FIELD MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY: A REFORMER AT THE WAR OFFICE, 1871-1900

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the career of Sir Garnet Wolseley from his appointment as Assistant Adjutant General in 1871 to his retirement from the post as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army at the end of 1900. Throughout the period Wolseley was the leader of the 'reform school', which strove to turn the British Army into an efficient fighting machine capable of waging war successfully anywhere in the world.

The thesis begins with an examination of why Wolseley chose the path of an army reformer and examines the areas in which he believed reform was most urgently needed. The Secretary of State for War, Cardwell, had instituted a series of reforms which fundamentally reorganised the British Army. Despite its flaws Wolseley defended the Cardwell system, in particular short service and the creation of the Army Reserve, and his efforts to make it function are examined in detail. Wolseley faced major obstacles in his battle to modernise the army, especially from the conservatism of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, and from the ignorance and parsimony of politicians. Controversially, he attempted to enlist the support of public opinion. Wolseley's interests extended beyond military reform to imperial and home defence, and his opinions in this area are analysed. In 1895 he was appointed Commander-in-Chief, a post whose authority had been weakened by recent reform. He was a disappointment in this position and did little to further the cause of reform, and the reasons for this failure are fully examined. Wolseley was blamed for the early reverses of the Boer War and the degree of his guilt is assessed.

The thesis will conclude that Wolseley could have made a vast contribution to army reform had he not faced virtually insurmountable obstacles. Nevertheless he was the leading reformer at the War Office, and in the different political and social climate after the Boer War, his successors were able to build the British Expeditionary Force of 1914 on the ground Wolseley had prepared.

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Abbreviations

A.A.G.	Assistant Adjutant General
BM	British Museum
Capt.	Captain
Col.	Colonel
D.A.Q.M.G.	Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General
D.M.I.	Director of Military Intelligence
Elgin Documents	Documents presented in evidence to the Royal Commission on the Preparations for the War in South Africa, Elgin, c.1789-92 (1904) XL, XLI, XLII
Gen.	General
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding
H.R.H.	His Royal Highness
I.H.R.	Institute of Historical Research
Journal	Wolseley's campaign journals
J.R.U.S.I.	Journal of the Royal United Service Institute
J.S.A.H.R.	Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research
Lieut.	Lieutenant
Lieut.-Col.	Lieutenant-Colonel
Lieut.-Gen.	Lieutenant-General
Maj.-Gen.	Major-General
M.O.D.	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
N.A.M.	National Army Museum
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
P.U.S.	Parliamentary Under Secretary

RA	Royal Archives
R.A.	Royal Artillery
R.E.	Royal Engineers
R.H.A.	Royal Horse Artillery
SSL	Drafts of Story of a Soldier's Life
U.S.M.	United Service Magazine
W.O.	War Office
WOP	Wolseley's Official Papers, Ministry of Defence Library
WPP	Wolseley's Private Papers, Hove

Contents

Introduction

Garnet Wolseley was without doubt one of the most successful and best-known colonial commanders of the Victorian age. His active fighting career covered many of the small wars of imperial expansion: from Burma, China, and India in the east, to Canada in the west, but most of all in Africa. Historians have tended to concentrate on this part of Wolseley's career and to ignore the post-1885 period of his life. His first biographers, Sir Frederick Maurice and Sir George Arthur, did cover Wolseley's entire life but it is obvious that they felt that the time he spent as a commander was more important than the period he served at the War Office. Later authors such as Joseph Lehmann, Byron Farwell, and Leigh Maxwell have concentrated on Wolseley as a commander. Lehmann devoted only 18 of 392 pages to Wolseley's career after the Gordon Relief expedition, and Maxwell and Farwell did not even get so far.[1]

Historians who have written on Wolseley's period at the War Office have tended to dismiss its value. Adrian Preston published three of Wolseley's campaign diaries with long critical introductions analysing Wolseley's career. To him Wolseley's post-1885 career 'in spite of the nominal importance of his successive appointments, was one steady process of disillusionment and decline, the long, slow denouement of his active career'. Brian Bond, in his survey of the Victorian Staff College, entitled the chapter covering the last quarter of the nineteenth century, "The Staff College in the Wolseley Era"; which suggests some recognition of the important role Wolseley played in the reform of the British Army. Other historians of the period such as Edward Spiers, Ramsay Skelley and Gwyn Harries-Jenkins have examined particular aspects of the British Army and paid tribute to Wolseley's work without really focusing on what he fought for and the degree of success he achieved.[2]

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[1] Sir F. Maurice & Sir G. Arthur, The Life of Lord Wolseley, (London, 1924); J. Lehmann, All Sir Garnet, (London, 1964); L. Maxwell, The Ashanti Ring, (London, 1985); B. Farwell, Eminent Victorian Soldiers, (London 1986)

[2] A. Preston, In Relief of Gordon, (London 1967); The South African Diary of Sir Garnet Wolseley 1875, (Cape Town 1971); The South African Journals of Sir Garnet Wolseley 1879-80, (Cape Town 1973); B. Bond, The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914, (London 1972); E. Spiers, The Army and Society 1815-1914, (London 1980); The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902, (Manchester 1992); A. Ramsay

Wolseley's commentary on his own career is unfortunately fragmentary. He completed and published two volumes of The Story of a Soldier's Life before his death in 1913. The second volume brought Wolseley's career up to the end of the Ashanti War. Notes exist for later volumes but only reach 1885. Wolseley had every intention of completing his autobiography, ending the second volume with the words: 'But should my narrative interest the general reader, it will be a pleasure to continue it to the date when I gladly bid good-bye to the War Office and ceased to be the nominal Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Land Forces'.[3]

Preston has argued that 'It has been the fault of Wolseley's biographers to claim for him too much rather than to appraise him for what he did, or, perhaps more importantly, for what he was unable to do'.[4] This thesis therefore aims to fill a major gap in the literature of the late Victorian British Army: an analysis of Wolseley's career at the War Office in order to ascertain what precisely he was trying to achieve and to what extent he succeeded. Why Wolseley was thankful to retire from the army at the end of 1900 needs examination. It is not enough to argue, as Preston has, that the Second Boer War had demonstrated that Wolseley had been a failure at the War Office and that he had been fighting for 'the unrestricted trial of a terminal experiment in defence organisation that the conditions and requirements of international politics rendered increasingly obsolete'. It is necessary to balance such an opinion with the views of contemporaries; for example, General Ellison, writing after the First World War, argued that, 'Nothing is more certain than that it was Lord Wolseley, and Lord Wolseley alone, who conceived the idea of an Expeditionary Force and, when he became Commander-in-Chief he gave effect to the idea after lesser men had done all in their power to obscure the vital point at issue'.[5]

The aim of this thesis is to examine Wolseley's career at the War Office from his appointment as Assistant Adjutant General in 1871 to his retirement from the post as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army at the end of 1900 in the light of these opinions. It will argue that

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Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home, (London 1977); G. Harries-Jenkins, The Army in Victorian Society, (London 1977)

[3] G.J. Wolseley, Story of a Soldier's Life, 2 Vols. (London 1903); notes for autobiography, WPP SLL, Hove Central Library

[4] Preston, 1875, p5

[5] Preston, 1875, p6; Ellison quoted in J. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army, (London 1938) p15-16

while it is an exaggeration to call Wolseley the 'father of the modern British Army'. Wolseley's contribution to the modernisation and professionalisation of the army during this period was vast and wide-ranging. Throughout the period Wolseley claimed to be the leader of the 'reform school' which strove to turn the British Army into an efficient fighting machine capable of waging war successfully anywhere in the world at short notice. It was to be a professional army, one in which the officers could make a career and advance on merit. In this area Wolseley revealed himself as a man of his time: groups such as lawyers, civil engineers, and architects were forming professional bodies to regulate standards. The Government was active in this respect too; in 1870 the civil service was reformed to ensure entry and promotion by merit.

Wolseley was absent in Canada while Cardwell was instituting his reforms of the organisation of the British Army against the vociferous opposition of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, a large body of the officer corps, and a section of Parliament. Despite his absence at the inception of the system that would remain in place throughout his career at the War Office and beyond, Wolseley had an important role to play in the Cardwell system: he and his colleagues had to make it function smoothly, they had to turn theory into practice. Wolseley has quite correctly been identified as the greatest defender of Cardwell's work despite its inherent faults. Wolseley struggled to make the system function despite parsimonious governments, the opposition of his superior, the Duke of Cambridge, and the criticisms of the greatest rival to his reputation as the foremost Victorian commander and reformer, Frederick Roberts.

Wolseley was not an original thinker; he did not have a grand scheme of reforms to turn the British Army into the fighting force he wanted. He was content to operate within the structure established by Cardwell, to struggle to ensure its intentions were carried out fully, and to suggest improvements where necessary. It is not intended to provide a survey of the Cardwell system since such information can be found elsewhere, but instead to concentrate on what aspects Wolseley placed the greatest importance and to comment on the degree of success he achieved. For example, Wolseley believed that the creation of the Army Reserve was the raison d'être of the Cardwell system and that the system of short service, which has received the most attention from later historians, had to be made a success in order to create and maintain such a reserve.

Wolseley's interests in military matters were wide-ranging. He was concerned with every aspect of the army from its organisation for war, to the training and education of the rank and file. He fought to improve the standards of the staff officers both by supporting the expanding Staff College at Camberley, and by advocating a system of selection for staff appointments and senior regimental commands. Beyond the work of his earlier career, The Soldier's Pocket Book for Field Service, and his entry for the 1872 Wellington Prize, Wolseley demonstrated little interest in the field of tactics. Nevertheless he remained abreast of developments in the area and was often an enthusiastic supporter of innovations such as machine guns and mounted infantry. Wolseley was also determined that such tactical developments should be taught and practised by the army and this struggle to prepare the British Army for warfare on a modern battlefield forms an important theme in Wolseley's career.

Wolseley was also interested in the realm of strategy and foreign policy. The late Victorian period has been seen by many as the period of relentless imperial expansion by successive governments with increasingly enthusiastic public support. Wolseley was almost certainly the first soldier to realise the extent of the problems caused by this expansion. It will be argued that while Wolseley himself took part in many of these small wars of colonial expansion and called himself a 'Jingo', he realised that the British Army was not sufficiently large to defend the whole Empire. Earlier than anyone he called for a definition to be made of the purposes for which the army existed and for a list of priorities to be established. The so-called 'Stanhope Memorandum' on 8 December 1888 went some of the way towards meeting Wolseley's demands, but it will be argued that Wolseley wanted a far more thorough survey to be made of British defence requirements and capabilities.

The opposition of the Duke of Cambridge to the Cardwell reforms has already been mentioned in passing. For most of Wolseley's career at the War Office, his identification with the reform school put him into opposition with the Duke whose conservatism was an anathema to Wolseley. As a cousin of the Queen the Duke found a ready body of supporters in the Court; Wolseley, without well-born connections, had no such advantage. Therefore Wolseley utilised the power of the press, which had become interested in military matters since Russell's despatches

from the Crimea, and the public, more of whom were receiving the vote as the franchise was extended both in 1868 and 1884. It will be demonstrated that Wolseley achieved some successes through his courting of publicity but also that this publicity nearly ended his career before he was really established as an army reformer.

Wolseley's tenure of the office as Commander-in-Chief between 1895 and 1900 has been seen as a period of disillusionment and disappointment. The reasons for this will be analysed in order to establish whether this opinion is true or not, and what new obstacles Wolseley faced now that he was rid of the Duke of Cambridge, and question whether in 1895 Wolseley was fit for the job. Finally Wolseley's role in the preparations for the Second Boer War will be examined to redress the opinion voiced by the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, that Wolseley had largely failed to carry out the tasks assigned to him.

Chapter 1 - The Making of the Army Reformer

This chapter will look at the type of man Wolseley was, and will examine the motivations behind his pursuit of a career and reputation as an army reformer, and analyse what aspects of the British Army Wolseley thought most needed urgent reform. The chapter will then look at the obstacles Wolseley faced in the cause of army reform, both from military men and from his political masters, and from society in general, and how he attempted to overcome these problems. It will be seen that Wolseley was very much a man of his times, influenced by the opinions held by many Victorians on subjects such as race, patriotism, and the Irish question. He was also a man who brought to the War Office a depth of practical experience: before joining the War Office staff in 1871 he had already served in Burma, India, China, and Canada, and had visited the United States during the Civil War there. Once at the War Office he continued to add to his practical experience of warfare with service in West and South Africa, Egypt, the Sudan, and Cyprus.

Wolseley's background provided a number of clues to the future army reformer and commander. He came from an Anglo-Irish background: his great-great-grandfather had fought in Ireland with King William III and had been awarded with land for his services. His father had served in Wellington's army and died when Wolseley was seven, leaving his family of seven children, (Garnet was the eldest) to survive on his army pension. Wolseley spent his early youth in genteel poverty near Dublin. The family could not afford to purchase Wolseley a commission but, after a great deal of persuasion the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Wellington, made Wolseley an ensign in the 12th Foot. Wolseley realised immediately that his best opportunity for advancement lay in active service. He therefore sought early transfer to the 80th Foot, which was on active service in Burma.[1]

Two aspects of Wolseley's early life stand out as exerting a strong influence on the older man. The first was the period he had spent in Ireland, and the second was his poverty. Wolseley's upbringing in Ireland had left him with a poor impression of the Irish, whom he despised for their

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[1] Lehmann, p13-15

religion and their poverty. Although he viewed Ireland as a fruitful source of recruits for the British Army and recognised the value of the Irish soldiery, he was angered by the agitation in Ireland for Home Rule and viewed it as unpatriotic. He shared the general sense of outrage after the Phoenix Park murders but was quick to emphasise the role of the Royal Irish Regiment at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir in order to help the government defuse the highly volatile situation in Ireland. Despite this political gesture Wolseley, earlier in the same year, voiced his suspicions of Irish loyalty to Britain; in his memoranda on the proposed Channel tunnel he wrote of the danger to its security by Fenian-inspired treachery.[2]

When Gladstone proposed to grant Home Rule to Ireland Wolseley was outraged. He described it as 'the silliest and most villainous proposal ever before put before the English people in a cloud of lies... If ever the loyal people of Ireland are driven to fight, I shall be glad to lead them'.[3] At that time he was Commander-in-Chief in Ireland and in his correspondence with the Duke of Cambridge he suggested that Home Rule had little support in Ireland: 'I think Home Rule as it was understood for the last five or six years is little thought of now'. Nevertheless the Ulster Protestants were disquieted by the second Home Rule Bill then before Parliament and in April 1893 Wolseley warned the Duke 'Ulster is determined to resist, & <u>will</u> <u>fight</u> *à outrance* if at any future time she be cut off from England'. He went on to say that 'if ever our troops are brought into collision with the loyalists of Ulster & blood is shed, it will shake the whole foundations upon which our army rests to such an extent, that I feel our army will never be the same again'.[4] It appears likely that had Wolseley lived to see the passing of the Home Rule Bill he would have been an outspoken supporter of the officers leading the Curragh mutiny.

Wolseley's dislike of the Irish was only part of his general dislike of all foreigners. He saw himself as a patriot, proud to be British and to state that he hated all foreigners and considered

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[2] Wolseley to Queen Victoria, 14 Sept. 1882, G.E. Buckle & A.C. Benson, (eds.) <u>The Letters of Queen Victoria</u>, (London, 1930-2) Vol. 3, 2nd series, p340-1; memo. on the Channel Tunnel, Wolseley, 16 June 1882, WO33/39

[3] Wolseley to Maurice, incomplete and undated but probably 1893, Maurice Papers, Liddell Hart Centre, 2/2/18

[4] Wolseley to Cambridge, 1 Jan. & 23 April 1893, Duke of Cambridge Papers, Royal Archives, Vic. Add. Mss. E/1/12892, 12945

himself a 'Jingo'.[5] Apart from his exploits on the battlefield Wolseley expressed these beliefs most clearly through his statements on military education. This was a subject close to Victorian hearts; the 1870 Education Act had made primary education compulsory but had not included physical education in the list of scholastic requirements. Wolseley and others feared that the compulsory period of military service imposed on their manhood by France and Germany might result in a physically stronger race. This might place Britain, with her voluntary system of army enlistment, at a possible disadvantage on the battlefield in the future unless the youth of Britain were trained physically from an early age and imbued with a spirit of patriotism. Therefore while drawing back from supporting the idea of conscription in Britain, Wolseley gave his support to the establishment of cadet corps, which trained youths along military lines, and to the Volunteers, Militia, and Yeomanry, who gave civilians a further taste of military discipline.[6]

This concept of patriotism coupled with the period of rapid imperial expansion led to a belief in the superiority of the white man and his right to rule over the so-called lesser 'coloured' races. Wolseley shared the racism of his contemporaries arguing that the 'negro is a cowardly, lazy fellow' who needed guidance from a 'superior' race. Of the tribes encountered during his fighting career Wolseley held some admiration only for the Ashanti and the Zulus, both of whom had organised military systems, had challenged British rule, fought well, and could be deemed 'martial races'. Not all Victorians shared these views. In 1879 Wolseley abandoned a plan to use the Swazis against the Zulus on the grounds that 'I have to think of the howling Societies at home who have sympathy with all black men whilst they care nothing for the miseries inflicted on their own kith and kin who have the misfortune to be located near these interesting niggers'. Later that year, once the publicity had died down after the capture of Cetewayo, Wolseley felt free to launch the Swazis on the stronghold of Sekukuni in a brief and successful campaign which led to the slaughter of many Swazis but few British soldiers.[7]

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[5] Journal, 16 Aug. 1878, WO147/6; Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 20 March 1880, WPP LW/P6

[6] For example, The Times, 20 Jan. 1887; 1 June 1889; 4 Dec. 1896; 12 Jan. 1898; G.J. Wolseley, 'War and Civilisation' in U.S.M. (May 1897); G.J. Wolseley, 'The Army' in T.H. Ward, (ed.) The Reign of Queen Victoria, (London, 1987) pp155-225

[7] G.J. Wolseley, 'The Negro as a Soldier', in Fortnightly Review, Dec. 1888; L. James, The Rise and Fall of the British Empire, (London, 1994) p194; British losses in the final battle for the Fighting Kopje were

The absence of parental influence to secure good positions within the army and the lack of financial resources to purchase them forced Wolseley to seek advancement through bravery in action. He was later quoted as saying, 'There is only one way for a young man to get on in the army. He must try to get killed in every way he possibly can'.[8] Wolseley's early career demonstrated the validity of this statement; he was at the forefront of many charges in Burma, the Crimea, the Indian Mutiny, and in China. He was wounded several times and lost the sight of his right eye in the Crimea. He was rapidly promoted for his bravery, and his promotion to major was delayed only because he had not served the requisite six years in the army necessary for advancement to that rank. Further successful active service led to Wolseley's promotion to the rank of Major-General in 1868, only 16 years after joining the British Army.

Wolseley never forgot that he had advanced solely through his own abilities and without the patronage of the royal court, of Horse Guards, or of any powerful army officer. He retained a life-long dislike for officers who through their social standing could obtain positions he coveted. Because of his rapid advancement through active service Wolseley came to equate advancement with success and to fear that failure in the field might weaken his position at the War Office. For example, he commanded the Gordon Relief expedition while still Adjutant General and wrote to his wife:

> What a host of enemies I have! Do you suppose it is only the usual number that a successful General has, or is there something about me that makes men bear me ill-will? I believe there are many who would rejoice if this expedition failed, because its failure would be mine.[9]

Wolseley's career as an army commander was ended by this expedition but there appears to be no evidence that its failure affected his position in the War Office.

Wolseley's fear of failure was to some extent influenced by his own financial situation. He had no private means and was wholly dependent on his army pay and on fees received for his articles. In 1883 Wolseley's financial situation was somewhat relieved by the grant that accompanied his elevation to a peerage. His correspondence with Gladstone at the time

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seven dead and 37 wounded; the Swazis lost approximately 600. Major G. Tylden, 'The Sekukuni Campaign of November-December 1879' in J.S.A.H.R., Vol. XXIX, (1951) pp129-35

[8] Quoted in H. How, 'Lord Wolseley', in The Strand Magazine, Vol. III, (May 1892) pp443-61

[9] Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 15 Jan. 1885, WPP LW/P11

demonstrates his financial worries. He had no sons to provide for and therefore the peerage would disappear with his death. Rather than receive the annuity for two lives which normally accompanied a peerage, Wolseley wanted to receive the money in a lump sum. He pressed for £35,000 but Gladstone fixed the sum at £30,000.[10] In 1895 Wolseley asked Sir John Ardagh to evaluate his chances of being made Commander-in-Chief because 'I am very poor. If I am not to be employed I shall have many servants to discharge, horses and carriages to sell etc. and all this is a serious matter'. The Duke of Cambridge had been a rich man whose pay as Commander-in-Chief allowed him to employ four aides-de-camp and a private secretary. The government took the opportunity of Wolseley's appointment to make a saving by reducing the number of aides-de-camp by two; the Duke had been paid £10,932 and Wolseley was to be paid £9,200. Since the entertaining requirement remained the same Wolseley was highly disappointed with this reduction in pay.[11]

Patronage was a feature of Victorian life; Wolseley resented his lack of a patron for his own career, and used what patronage he could give to advance the careers of those men who he believed were fit for promotion. His resentment of his own position is clear from an extract from his South African journal:

> Throughout my life I have always felt myself heavily weighted in the race for power, and I often think, if I had had for my father a Lord Chancellor, as Chelmsford had, instead of being a poor Major in a marching Regiment, what could now have been my position! How many times in my life might not the authorities have pushed me on.[12]

On his campaigns Wolseley was sometimes asked to take protégés of some influential personage and was often disappointed with their performance. The Prince of Wales had urged Wolseley to take Colonel Stanley Clarke with him to the Sudan; in a letter to the Duke of Cambridge Wolseley described Clarke as 'a charming man in society, but useless in the field in every way'. Hartington had pressed Wolseley to take General Sir Charles Wilson and Wolseley wrote of him that 'the

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10 Wolseley to Gladstone, 10 Feb. 1883; Wolseley to Gladstone, 22 April 1883; Gladstone memo. 23 April 1883; all in Gladstone Papers, British Museum, BM 44479, 44480, 44767

11 Wolseley to Ardagh, 5 July 1895, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/2; Memo. on pay of the Commander-in-Chief, Lansdowne, 4 Nov. 1895, CAB37/40

12 Journal, 28 Dec. 1879, WO147/7

realities of war which he had seen for the first time in his life, had somewhat shaken his nerve'.[13] Only Frederick Burnaby, a friend of the Prince of Wales, impressed Wolseley with his bravery in the Sudan.

The so-called 'Wolseley Ring' developed out of two features of Victorian military life: the use of patronage by the Duke of Cambridge and other senior officers, and the method of promotion to senior ranks in the army by seniority rather than selection. More will be said later of Wolseley's opinions on the quality of staff and senior regimental officers. Bereft of a patron himself, Wolseley sought to set himself up as a competitor to the Duke of Cambridge by creating a circle of protégés whose ability Wolseley cultivated and whom in turn would be of use in promoting the interests of their chief. There were several qualifications for membership of the ring, such as loyalty to Wolseley, intellect, bravery, and experience of war.[14] Having a powerful father was certainly not a qualification, as Wolseley replied to Colonel Mansell-Pleydell who had written to Wolseley in 1882 asking for his assistance in advancing his son's career: 'Were I to recommend for promotion every officer whose father thinks he deserves reward, all but orphans would be Field Marshals'.[15] Wolseley had selected Mansell-Pleydell's son for the mounted infantry in Egypt but did not feel that this obliged him to advance the man's career any further.

The subject of the Wolseley Ring while Wolseley was a commander has been covered elsewhere and little more needs to be said than to quote Wolseley's opinions on the subject and the reaction from the Duke.[16] Wolseley strongly believed that a commander must have faith in his tools in order to conduct a successful campaign, and he told Archibald Forbes:

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[13] Colonel Stanley Clarke appealed to the Prince of Wales for some reward for his services in the Sudan. Wolseley refused to sanction any such reward. Ponsonby to Smith, 10 Oct. 1885; Wolseley to Smith, 13 Oct. 1885; Smith to Ponsonby, 14 Oct. 1885, W.H. Smith Papers P.R.O. WO110/1; Wolseley to Cambridge, 11 May 1885, RA E/1/11181 ; Wolseley to Hartington, 28 Jan. 1885, Devonshire Papers, Chatsworth 340.1649

[14] Out of the membership of the ring McNeil, Wood, Dr Anthony Hume, Buller, and Gifford were all holders of the Victorian Cross. It can be argued that one of the many reasons why Wolseley disliked the Duke of Cambridge was that the Duke had held a divisional command in the Crimea but after witnessing the battle at Alma had done his best to return home. Although the Duke was eventually invalided home after contracting typhoid fever the rumours of cowardice remained and Wolseley never forgot this. I.F.W. Beckett, 'Wolseley and the Ring', Soldiers of the Queen, No. 69, (June 1992) pp14-25; G. St Aubyn, The Royal George, (London 1963) pp70-88; Journal, 11 July 1875, WO147/5

[15] Wolseley to Mansell-Pleydell, 21 Dec. 1882, WPP PLB1

[16] For more on the subject of patronage see I. Harvie, '"The Wolseley Ring": a Case-Study in the Exercise of Patronage in the Late Victorian Army', Buckingham MA thesis (1993); Beckett, 'Wolseley and the Ring',

> I know these men of mine and they know me. I selected them originally because of my discernment of character, not at the behest of interest or from the dictates of nepotism. We have worked long together; their familiarity with my methods and my just reliance on them relieves me of half the burden of command.[17]

This trust could sometimes be misplaced. For example, Redvers Buller caused a serious delay on the Gordon Relief expedition by failing to order a sufficient quantity of coal for the steamers, or enough camels. Wolseley concluded that Buller would 'make a much better fighting General than a Staff Officer', but he would be disappointed in this respect in 1899. William Butler proved difficult to handle in the Sudan in 1884 and Wolseley wrote to his wife: 'I shall have to drop him from my list except for a big war where I could make him a Brigadier-General and see what he would be worth in that position'. Indeed Butler appears to have been so temperamental that Wolseley wrote to him in 1886, when Butler was serving in the British Army in Egypt under General Stephenson, that Butler's despatches bordered on insubordination and that 'you must learn to work in a team before you can drive one'.[18]

The Duke of Cambridge criticised Wolseley's selections for his staff on the grounds not only that they overrode the principle of seniority but also that the circle was too narrow. He wrote to Wolseley in March 1885:

> You will be obliged to take some who have not seen much active service so far, for the best reason in the world that our wars of late have not been numerous, and that the same officers have generally been employed; consequently your area of choice becomes somewhat limited.[19]

Wolseley replied that 'I think I may say that I have always endeavoured to bring forward new untried men: I have certainly done so on this campaign and have not been happy in the selections made'. Wolseley went on to describe the performance of these men, 15 of whom he listed; of the eight tried under fire, two, Henry Brackenbury and Butler, had done well; Colonel Talbot, Ewart and Gough reasonably; and Wilson, Boscawen and Clarke badly. Of the seven not tried under fire,

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17 A. Forbes, Souvenirs of Some Continents, (London, 1885), p171-2; also in A. Forbes, 'Wolseley: A Character Sketch', The English Illustrated Magazine, Vol. II, (May 1885) pp519-23
18 Journal, 9 Jan. 1885, WO147/8; Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 23 Dec. 1884 WPP LW/P10; Wolseley to Butler, 13 May 1886, WPP PLB1; Journal, 22 Aug. 1884, WO147/7
19 Cambridge to Wolseley, 6 March 1885, W. Verner, The Military Life of H.R.H. George Duke of Cambridge, (London 1905) p296

only Dormer, Henbon, Purvie and Blundell did well. Some comments were quite caustic such as that on Colonel White of the Essex Regiment - 'not fit to be a corporal'.[20]

Wolseley's patronage extended beyond the field to affect the careers of his protégés while he was at the War Office. Wolseley felt that Evelyn Wood lacked the brain power to be a commander in war but nevertheless the two men formed a fruitful partnership while Wolseley was at the War Office and Wood held the Aldershot command. Wolseley was instrumental in securing Henry Brackenbury's promotion to major-general in 1885 and his position in the Intelligence Department. He was then disappointed when Brackenbury adopted the Indian point of view of the defence of India while serving there, though they later worked well together when Brackenbury was Director of Ordnance and Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief. He encouraged some young men, such as J. Adye and E.S.E. Childers, who had served under him in the field, to enter the Staff College in order to gain the theoretical knowledge necessary for a staff officer. Wolseley also advised Ardagh to get some regimental experience in India in 1892 before returning to Britain where Wolseley hoped to secure for him the appointment as head of the Intelligence Department.[21]

Intellect was a quality admired by Wolseley and J. F. Maurice was one of the most intellectual members of the ring. Maurice won the 1872 Wellington Prize, beating Wolseley and others in a strong field, and joined the teaching staff at Sandhurst. He served with Wolseley on all his major campaigns, and as the author of the official history of the 1882 campaign ably defended Wolseley from his critics and took his part wholeheartedly in the argument with Hamley. In fact Maurice has not unjustly been called the 'pen of Wolseley', and his writings on army reform backed up Wolseley's own opinions.[22] Although Wolseley valued intellect he recognised that without experience it had little value in the field particularly in senior staff posts. He admired Edward Hamley's writings on tactics and his value as a educator but was disappointed by his performance in Egypt. Maurice described the problem in a review of A.I. Shand's Life of Sir E. Hamley for the United Services Magazine: Wolseley found that 'Sir E. Hamley with all his

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20 Wolseley to Cambridge, 4 April 1885, RA E/1/11123
21 Brackenbury to Wolseley, 13 Aug. 1885, WPP; Wolseley to Ardagh, 19 July 1892, Ardagh Papers PRO30/40/2
22 J. Luvaacs, The Education of An Army, (London, 1965)

theoretical knowledge of war, had completely lost touch of the practical workings of large bodies of men, and that he was always so full of his own importance, that he could not be trusted to carry out orders that he received'. This is why in his despatches Wolseley gave a more prominent place to the role played by Archibald Alison than to Hamley's. In later years Hamley and Wolseley served the same interests; both emphasised the vital subject of home defence and Hamley's abilities as a public speaker must have helped Wolseley in this area.[23]

There can be little doubt that personal ambition was a major motivation behind Wolseley's choice of a career as an army reformer. Nevertheless it is unfair to accuse Wolseley as Adrian Preston has of exploiting 'the cause of reform in his own rather than the nation's best interests'.[24] Wolseley's experience of war both before and after he joined the War Office staff provided ample evidence that the British Army was in urgent need of reform in many areas. Wolseley brought to the War Office a depth of practical experience in the field equalled by none of his colleagues. He had witnessed at first hand in the trenches before Sebastopol in the winter of 1854-5 the depths to which the army could decline. His campaign and command experience highlighted for him the weaknesses of the army, the areas in which urgent reform was most needed, and the direction these reforms should take.

Wolseley's enthusiasm for short service stemmed from his period in Canada during the 1860s. His observation of the training of Confederate troops during the American Civil War,[25] and his own position as Commandant of the La Prairie cadet school near Montreal convinced Wolseley that short service was workable: only a short period of military training was necessary to turn a raw recruit into an adequately trained soldier. Then after a short period of service in the colours the trained man could be surrendered to the Army Reserve. Wolseley saw the existence of this Reserve as vital to forestall a repeat of the tragedy of the Crimean War when no reserves were

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[23] J.F. Maurice, 'Critics and Campaigning', in Fortnightly Review, (July 1888); 'Sir E. Hamley and Lord Wolseley', in U.S.M. Vol. 9, (1895); A.I. Shand, The Life of General Sir Edward Bruce Hamley, (Edinburgh 1895)

[24] Preston, 1875, p73

[25] G.J. Wolseley, 'A Month's Visit to Confederate Headquarters', in Blackwoods, Vol. XCIII, No. 568, (Jan. 1863) pp1-29; 'General Lee', in Macmillans, Vol. 55, (March 1887) pp321-31; 'An English View of the Civil War', in North American Review, Vol. CXLIX, Nos. 391-7, (June-Dec. 1889); J. Luvaacs, The Military Legacy of the Civil War, (Chicago 1959)

available and the government despatched barely trained recruits, which Lord Raglan could not use, as replacements.[26] This period of training the Canadian militia also convinced Wolseley that the auxiliary forces could play a more active role in the organisation of the army. Wolseley had limited contact with the auxiliary forces while at the War Office: he served briefly as Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces in 1875, but beyond that appointment his interest was confined to giving them encouragement through his speeches to various corps, and to giving them a role in the scheme of mobilisation for home defence.

During his career as a commander Wolseley was made fully aware of the defects of the short service system particularly with reference to the youth of the majority of the rank and file and NCOs. It is somewhat ironic that the man who would spend his career at the War Office justifying and defending short service should, as a commander in the field, resort to using picked men for his rank and file. He attempted to justify his conduct in a letter to the Duke of Cambridge from the Gold Coast:

> The proposals I put forward relative to the formation of battalions for this service were based upon the belief that our Infantry at present - so unlike what it was in days gone by - being so largely composed of growing lads, was unfitted for the fatigues of a tropical campaign, it would be necessary to draft into any whole battalion selected for the work so many volunteers from other corps, that regimental spirit... would be swamped.[27]

In this case Wolseley had requested that the third British battalion on standby for despatch to the Gold Coast should be composed of eight companies selected one from each of the next eight battalions on the roster, rather than the next complete battalion on the list. The conditions on the Gold Coast were unique; the bush was so thick that it was necessary to alter the ratio of officers to men to 1:20, and experienced men were needed to fight in what amounted to near darkness. On this occasion Wolseley did not get the battalion composed according to his instructions; his solution was to use the more experienced 42nd Regiment before the 23rd Regiment even though the 23rd was higher on the list. Wolseley again acted against the rules in South Africa, when he

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26 For example, Wolseley to Maurice, 20 Sept. 1887, in Life of Wolseley, (London, 1924) p226
27 Wolseley to Cambridge, 3 Sept. 1873, Verner, p67

did not disembark the Royal Marines sent out as reinforcements after Isandhlwana because he did not need them. The Duke of Cambridge was furious with Wolseley on both occasions.[28]

The controversy over the use of picked men reached its peak over the formation of the Camel Corps for the Gordon Relief expedition. Wolseley proposed to create this unique force by taking 40 men from each Guards regiment, and from two battalions of the Rifle Brigade, and 100 Royal Marines. The Duke was appalled because the creation of this special force would cripple the cavalry and the Guards by denying them their best men. He was shocked by the idea of mounting Guards regiments on camels and it must be admitted that Wolseley did find some humour in the situation.[29] The Queen, probably prompted by the Duke, also entered into the dispute, writing to the Secretary of State for War, Lord Hartington, that she 'believed that the principle of breaking up regiments had been condemned as unsound'. Hartington replied that the principle was only unsound when used to bring battalions destined for foreign service up to full strength. The formation of the Camel Corps was a different case because it was a specially formed corps and there was no other way in which the cavalry at home could have been used. Wolseley remained unrepentant about the Camel Corps despite the fact that the experiment of asking cavalrymen to fight dismounted in the infantry formation of the square had been proved wrong when the square broke at the battle of Abu Klea. In the notes for his autobiography Wolseley advised future commanders 'I beg of you to select all ranks for any such dangerous venture according to the plan adopted for raising the Camel Corps that fought at Abu Klea and Gubat'.[30]

The transport and supply system had broken down completely in the Crimea, leading to a 35% decline in the fighting strength of the army. Although the government immediately instituted a series of reforms designed to remedy the situation, Wolseley argued in later years that these reforms had not gone far enough.[31] His main concern centred on the inadequacy of the nucleus of

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[28] Cambridge to Wolseley, 6 Feb. 1874 & 18 Aug. 1879, Verner, p85 & 166

[29] Hartington to Wolseley, 19 Sept. 1884, Life of Wolseley, p182; Cambridge to Wolseley, 19 Sept. 1884, Verner, p266; Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 1 Dec. 1884, WPP LW/P10; Lord Gleichen agreed with Wolseley on the humour of the situation, see Lord E. Gleichen, With the Camel Corps Up The Nile, (London, 1888)

[30] Queen to Hartington, 22 Sept. 1884, Buckle, Vol. 3, 2nd series, p540; Wolseley on the performance of the Camel Corps, Journal, 21 Jan. 1885, WO147/8

[31] In December 1854 the responsibility for supply and transport was transferred from the Treasury to the War Office; in May 1855 the office of Master-General of the Ordnance was reformed; the supply of

regimental transport permitted by the reforms. Wolseley wanted a greater number of men trained in the complexities of transport and supply so that local resources at the seat of a war could be utilised fully. He recognised the difficulties in the way of the maintenance of a large body of transport: the army could be called upon to fight anywhere in the world in differing climates and across various terrains. Nevertheless, Wolseley highlighted one area of transport the army generally ignored: the Franco-Prussian War had proved the vital role railways could play in the rapid concentration of troops at the front. The lack of rolling stock and trained engine drivers caused a delay to Wolseley's advance inland along the railway adjacent to the Sweetwater Canal from the base at Ismailia during the 1882 campaign. Two years later the situation was no better as delays beset the proposal to build a railway from Suakin to Berber in the Sudan. Wolseley also perceived the vital role of railways in home defence and devoted much attention to the subject, as is shown by his collection of pamphlets on the subject to be found in his collection of private papers.[32]

The morale of the army became more important as the average age of the soldier fell under short service. Wolseley had been horrified to discover in the Crimea that few soldiers had ever seen Lord Raglan, and many did not even know the name of their Commander-in-Chief. The soldiers also felt abandoned by their officers who appeared to know little of their suffering and to care even less. When in Canada, Wolseley filled a gap in military literature with the production of The Soldier's Pocket Book for Field Service, which is full of instructions to officers on how to treat the rank and file, and basic advice on areas such as cooking, hygiene, and elementary first aid. As a commander in the field Wolseley made every possible provision for the welfare of his men, realising that without the men a commander could do nothing. This concern was particularly evident in the Ashanti campaign on the notoriously unhealthy Gold Coast. His actions were rewarded with the phrase adopted in the home army of 'All Sir Garnet' to signify that all was in order. Later in the War Office Wolseley continued to care for the welfare of the rank and file,

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munitions, field equipment, and clothing was transferred to the War Office; the Land Transport Corps raised during the war was retained in peace under the name of the Military Train; and a limited amount of regimental transport was permitted. C. Barnett, Britain and Her Army, (London, 1970) p288-90

[32] WPP RLY 2

fighting for the introduction of a more practical fighting dress, and for improvements in medical facilities. The Queen strenuously opposed the introduction of khaki, but warmly supported Wolseley's campaign for the improvement of medical care.

A trained army well-equipped and supplied could only fight well if its staff and senior regimental officers were fit for the job. Wolseley clearly believed that the quality of staff officers was in need of urgent improvement. For example, he sent home two-thirds of the generals who had served under Lord Chelmsford during the Zulu War, informing the Duke of Cambridge that 'for the want of good leaders here, I am forced to give command of the column I am about to operate with to officers holding the rank of only Lieutenant-Colonel'.[33] Cardwell had hoped to introduce selection for all ranks above major but had been forced to back down because of the Duke's preference for promotion by seniority. The eventual compromise of 'seniority tempered by selection'[34] which eventually evolved into seniority tempered by rare rejections did not satisfy Wolseley, who would continue to press for selection while at the War Office. Wolseley's personal solution as a commander was to appoint the men he wanted to important commands. In 1879 Wolseley held onto Lieutenant-Colonel Baker Russell, who was under orders for India, for long enough for him to command the assault on Sekukuni's Town. Wolseley recommended that Wood's temporary rank of major-general in the Zulu War should be made permanent but the Duke resisted this. Wolseley wanted George Colley, who had served with Wolseley on the Gold Coast, to be appointed his second-in-command and possible successor in case of a mishap although the senior general on the spot was Major-General Clifford. The Duke settled the dispute by confirming Clifford as Wolseley's deputy because 'no army could stand these sorts of preferences without entirely dampening the energies of senior officers'. Wolseley's somewhat caustic reply was that he 'naturally assumed it would be the object of the Government that the ablest and most fitting man should succeed me'.[35] In other words the Commander-in-Chief was acutely aware of the need to

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33 Wolseley to Cambridge, 18 July 1879, Verner, p162

34 14 July 1871, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Vol. CCVII

35 Cambridge to Wolseley, 12 Aug. 1879; Wolseley to Cambridge, 28 Sept. 1879, both in Verner, pp164 & 170

maintain morale among senior officers, and Wolseley was equally aware of the requirement for efficient officers in the field.

Wolseley hoped to solve the problem of the inadequacies of staff officers by encouraging senior officers to take a deeper interest in military education. Wolseley wrote in the United Services Magazine that 'experience does not compensate for lack of knowledge in strategy and tactics, a knowledge which is to be learnt only from the careful study of military history', and that 'war is a science, and as such has its principles, and rules deduced from those principles quite as surely as every other science'.[36] He felt that the Staff College was the ideal place to supply this knowledge and demonstrated his support for Staff College graduates while a commander by writing to the Duke in December 1884, 'my idea is to give every Staff College officer and everyone strongly recommended by a good commanding officer a chance in a subordinate position of showing what he can do and what he is worth'.[37] Many of the staff in the Ashanti campaign and six of the 22 special service officers were Staff College graduates, as were 34 staff officers in Egypt, and 20 on the Gordon Relief expedition. Certainly Wolseley seems to have appealed to Staff College graduates; in his memoirs Ian Hamilton wrote 'had I gone to the Staff College I should probably have gravitated towards the Wolseley Ring'.[38] Instead Hamilton became an aide-de-camp to Roberts and moved towards Roberts's point of view on the army.

A successful army also needed to be well organised along a system prepared before an expedition was despatched. Even after the creation of the mobilisation scheme in 1875, and its overhaul by Hugh Childers, the Egyptian campaign in 1882 showed that the British Army was still incapable of despatching a well-organised expedition abroad. Troops were called upon from Britain, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Aden and India, and there was a partial mobilisation of the Army Reserve. Wolseley wrote to his wife after Tel-el-Kebir, 'I hope the English people will be pleased: they can never know the difficulties an English commander has to struggle against with an army hastily thrown together without cohesion between its component parts and no organised

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36 G.J. Wolseley, 'The Study of War' in U.S.M., Vol. 2, (March 1891), pp481-93; G.J. Wolseley, 'War' in Fortnightly Review, Vol. XLV, No. 265, (Jan. 1889) pp1-17

37 Wolseley to Cambridge, 11 Dec. 1884, in Verner, p273

38 Bond, Staff College, p127; I. Hamilton, Listening for the Drums, (London, 1944), p150

transport'.[39] As Adjutant General Wolseley would supervise the drawing up of realistic and workable mobilisation schemes.

The provision of accurate intelligence was also vital for success in the field. Despite the establishment of the Intelligence Department in 1873 under Major-General Sir Patrick MacDougall, the provision of intelligence in many areas, particularly the Gold Coast and the Sudan, was woefully inadequate.[40] Wolseley tried to remedy this situation by installing his protégé Brackenbury as head of the Intelligence Department in 1886.

Wolseley's experiences during the Indian Mutiny provided few lessons of value to his career as an army reformer. The Mutiny did, however, colour Wolseley's attitude towards India, which remained unchanged for the remainder of his career. In the first place Wolseley despised the officers of the East India Company and described them as useless. Based on this experience he fought against proposals put forward by Frederick Roberts and Sir Charles Dilke for a split of the British Army into two separate bodies: one recruited on long service for India and the colonies; and the other recruited on short service for home defence. Wolseley strongly believed that any lengthened period of service in a hot climate such as India seriously undermined the health and efficiency of the private soldier. He also put little value on the fighting abilities of the native soldier and, like many Victorians, never fully trusted their loyalty. This distrust forced the government to send more British battalions to India whenever the military authorities there perceived a need for an increase rather than to augment on a large scale the establishment of the native army. Wolseley's opinions on the effect the increases to the Indian establishment had on the efficiency of the home army and the validity of such increases will be discussed in later chapters.

It is worthwhile to discuss here an argument that has been put forward by the defenders of Roberts that Wolseley's attitude towards India was coloured by a hankering after the supreme command there. In 1879 Wolseley wrote to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, that he was interested in being appointed Commander-in-Chief in India:

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39 B. Bond, 'Mr. Gladstone's Invasion of Egypt 1882' in Army Quarterly, Vol. 81, (1960) pp87-92; Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 14 Sept. 1882, WPP LW/P8

40 H. Brackenbury, Narrative of the Ashanti War, (Edinburgh 1874); Journal, 5 Oct. 1884, WO147/8

> I believe that great reforms are possible in the Indian army, and I should like to carry them out before I turn into a cut and dry old general to who [sic] reforms are an abomination. All the young school of soldiers are well aware that considerable reforms are required in our home army also, but as I am known to hold these views I can never hope for any great military position in England under the existing regime at the Horse Guards. My only opening therefore is in India.[41]

The choice of country in which Wolseley could reform the army was of less importance than the opportunity to do so. A year later Wolseley was appointed Quartermaster General and was soon convinced that he was destined to hold further high appointments at the War Office. Therefore the necessity of going to India to gain the opportunity to reform the army disappeared. Consequently when, in 1890, the question was raised of sending Wolseley to India to succeed Roberts was mooted, Wolseley declined the appointment, preferring to take the command in Ireland and to await the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge.[42]

Another lesson Wolseley learnt from his experiences in the field which would have a great effect on his career at the War Office was that politicians should not be trusted. The government set up a Royal Commission to investigate conditions in the Crimea after the outcry raised following the despatches in The Times by W.H. Russell. It placed the blame on the shoulders of the Quartermaster General Sir Richard Airey of whom Wolseley said, 'no man knew our army better in every sense'.[43] The fickleness of governments and the public towards their military commanders continued throughout the period. It was a feature of the Victorian public and politicians to heap honours on their successful commanders and then to ditch them totally when a mistake was made, and Chelmsford and Buller were two notable examples of this practice. Wolseley himself was a little more fortunate; he received many honours for his successful campaigns, skilfully manoeuvred the blame for the failure to rescue Gordon onto the Gladstone government, but was rather less successful in his defence of his conduct in the months preceding the outbreak of the Second Boer War. This last case will be examined in a later chapter.

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41 Wolseley to Salisbury, 16 Feb. 1879, Cyprus Letter Book, BM 41324

42 Wolseley to Stanhope, 1890, in Life of Wolseley, p249; Stanhope to Salisbury, 29 April 1890, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield; Roberts was not keen for Wolseley to succeed him because of Wolseley's attitude towards the native soldiers. Roberts to Napier, 12 May 1889, Roberts Papers, N.A.M. 100/2 CXXX

43 Report of the Commission into the Supplies of the British Army in the Crimea, (1856) XX; Wolseley, Story , Vol. 1, p145

In 1871 Wolseley returned to Britain to take up the appointment as Assistant Adjutant General. Wolseley soon discovered the obstacles lying in the path of army reform. In the first place there was the Duke of Cambridge who has been described as 'a thorough-going representative of the old school, and for more than twenty years was destined to impose the weight of his authority against all change'.[44] Then there were the politicians with their inexperience of military requirements and their apparently overriding concern with party politics and financial retrenchment. Furthermore the public was largely ignorant of military affairs and showed little willingness to be educated on the subject.

The Duke had good reason to be suspicious of Wolseley's radicalism when the latter joined the War Office. In the Soldier's Pocket Book Wolseley had made the radical suggestion, 'Let us sink as far as possible the respective titles of officers, sergeants, and privates, merging them into one great professional cognomen of soldier... Let us give up the phrase "officer and gentleman", substituting that of "soldier" for it...'.[45] Wolseley then added to his reputation by publishing his wholehearted espousal of the cause of army reform in an article for Macmillan's in 1871. The Duke tried to avert the inevitable clash between the two opposing points of view by keeping Wolseley away from the War Office as much as possible. Wolseley was sent first to command the expedition against the Ashanti in 1873-4, then to Natal in 1875 to impose a new constitution on the colonists; in 1876 he was seconded to the Indian Council in London; and finally in 1878 he was appointed Governor-General of Britain's latest acquisition, Cyprus. This last appointment was made by the Disraeli government without prior reference to the Duke of Cambridge.

In his Cyprus journal Wolseley wrote of the Duke, 'He doesn't love me, but I flatter myself I enjoy what is to me more valued than his affection, namely his fear'.[46] Wolseley's letter to Salisbury on his chances of reforming the British Army has already been quoted and in the notes

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44 L.S. Amery, The Times History of the War in South Africa, (London, 1900-09) Vol. 2, p14
45 G.J. Wolseley, The Soldier's Pocket Book for Field Service, (London 1886) p1; G.J. Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements', in Macmillans, Vol. XXIII, No. 138, (April 1871) pp524-36
46 Journal, 19 July 1878, WO147/6

for his autobiography Wolseley gave what he believed to be the reason why he was not sent to India: the Duke's

> dislike for me was so great at that time that, whilst he was very anxious to get me away from Army Head Quarters, he feared to give me any high post abroad, lest it should add to my influence in the Army, and make me so powerful that I might possibly oust him from his own position which he had come to regard as permanently his.[47]

Wolseley may have been exaggerating his own position; at that time Wolseley was viewed primarily as a successful commander and few outside the War Office had much idea of the debates within on the subject of army reform.

Late Victorian politics witnessed the growth of democracy as the franchise was slowly extended and as the population became more educated and articulate. Wolseley was no supporter of democracy. He complained in a letter to Ardagh in 1892 that '"Jaw" is now King, and the man who can flatter the crowd most effectively is he who obtains the privilege of being its well paid servant'.[48] In 1890 he wrote to his wife that longed for the time when 'the licence of democracy and socialism will be conquered by the sword, and succeeded by a cruel military despotism... A new Cromwell will clear the country of these frothing talkers, and soldiers will rule. Would that my lot could have been cast in such an era'.[49] This should not be interpreted as a demonstration of Caesarist tendencies on Wolseley's behalf, but more as a cry of desperation from a man who could see how the British Army could be improved yet found his efforts thwarted by party political requirements, Treasury control, and the inexperience and inefficiency of his political superiors.

Wolseley tended to judge the worth of his political masters by their willingness to listen to the advice proffered by the military experts, particularly himself, and by their espousal of Britain's position in the world. On the latter point Disraeli came in for praise for his aggressive policy of imperial expansion, but Gladstone did not. Wolseley never forgave Gladstone for submitting to the Boers in 1881 nor for his refusal to despatch an expedition to rescue Gordon until too late, and commented with relief on Gladstone's retirement: 'The arch traitor Mr. Gladstone has reached the

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47 Notes for Autobiography, WPP SSL8
48 Wolseley to Ardagh, 19 July 1892, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/2
49 Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 1 Nov. 1890, quoted in Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p155

end of his ignoble career; "an extinct volcano" that can no longer vomit forth destruction to his country'.[50]

Wolseley served under nine different Secretaries of State for War, only one of whom, Colonel Stanley, had any military experience.[51] He wrote of Cardwell that 'no British War Minister ever responded more readily to demands made upon him by his military advisers'.[52] He granted a qualified approval to Childers who 'was a very keen Army Reformer, but first of all he was a devoted follower of Mr. Gladstone'.[53] He praised both W.H. Smith and particularly Edward Stanhope for the hard work they had put into reforming the army, and was grateful to Hartington for the support he had given Wolseley during the difficult months of the Gordon Relief Expedition. Colonel Stanley had also been helpful, on one occasion he rewrote in his own handwriting Wolseley's list of staff officers for Cyprus so as not to arouse the Duke's suspicions of Wolseley's intentions.[54] Wolseley was far more critical of Secretaries of State who paid him little attention: he noted in his journal that 'H.R.H. seems now under Mr. Hardy's regime to do what he likes with the Army'. But Wolseley reserved his strongest criticisms for Lord Lansdowne, whom he blamed for the early reverses suffered during the Second Boer War: 'I have to deal in Lansdowne with a man of the smallest mind and who is surprisingly ignorant on every point connected with soldiers and with war'.[55]

It will be seen throughout this thesis that virtually all of Wolseley's proposals on army reform involved an increase in army expenditure. This was to prove to be the greatest barrier in the battle for an efficient and effective British Army. Arnold-Forster claimed that 'It will be time enough to put the blame on the public when the public has been asked to sanction an increase [of expenditure] and has refused'.[56] Arnold-Forster missed the vital point: by the time the Estimates

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[50] Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 23 March 1880, WPP LW/P6; Wolseley to Cambridge, 1 June 1896 in J. Wilson, CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, (London 1973) p210

[51] Stanley had served for seven years in the Grenadier Guards.

[52] Wolseley, Story, Vol. II, p240

[53] WPP SSL10

[54] Wolseley to Smith, 9 Jan. 1887, in Viscount Chilston, W.H. Smith, (London 1965) p233; Brackenbury to Stanhope, 9 April 1892, Stanhope Papers, Kent Record Office, 0259; Ellis to Hartington, 2 March 1885, Devonshire Papers 340.1675; Journal, 19 July 1878, WO147/6

[55] Journal, 11 July 1875, WO147/5; Wolseley to George Wolseley, 1 Dec. 1899, Wolseley Papers, Duke University

[56] H.O. Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, (London 1898) p42

reached Parliament they had been subjected to strict scrutiny and reduction by civilian financial officials both within the War Office and in the Treasury. This is why Wolseley gave evidence to the Stephens Commission arguing that the Commander-in-Chief should be empowered to make an annual statement to Parliament on the state of the army. He would have the opportunity to present in public any financial requirements of the army not met by the Estimates and allow Parliament to decide whether to believe the Commander-in-Chief or the Secretary of State. This would, however, not have been in sympathy with the procedures of a parliamentary democracy, which was one of the reasons why Wolseley raged against the machinations of party politics.[57]

This chapter has argued that Wolseley was a highly ambitious man with an individualistic approach to military affairs. He saw a genuine need for reforms in the British Army and his personal ambition for high office led him to pursue a career as an army reformer. He countered the Duke of Cambridge's influence by building up his own ring of supporters and secured for them important appointments where they could further the cause of reform. Wolseley held strong opinions on individuals and his comments were usually uncharitable unless the individual under scrutiny met with Wolseley's criteria for approval: loyalty to Wolseley and a readiness to accept his advice. The various obstacles in the path of army reform have been identified and this thesis will examine how Wolseley sought to overcome them. One major barrier against army reform was the apathy of the general public: the army was unpopular in society and the military viewed with suspicion. Therefore Wolseley would appeal directly to the public in order to further his own career as a reformer, to benefit the army by improving its status in society, and to win the public's support for military expenditure. These appeals will be the subject of the following chapter.

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57 The subject of civil-military relations is complex, and has been covered in W.S. Hamer, The British Army: Civil-Military Relations 1885-1905 (Oxford 1970)

Chapter 2 - The Public Critic

This chapter will demonstrate how Wolseley attempted to manipulate public opinion for his own ends and for the benefit of the British Army. He did this through writing articles for a number of public journals and by making speeches which were then widely reported in the press. The chapter will argue that Wolseley's cultivation of the public had a number of motives: he wished to strengthen his own position at the expense of the Duke of Cambridge; he recognised the need to explain the recent reforms to the public to ensure their continuation and further development; he also wanted public support to pressurise the government into granting funds for essential expenditure to improve the army's efficiency.

This public airing of military matters led to a great deal of controversy caused not only by what Wolseley actually said but also by the fact that he said anything at all. The Duke was consistently forced onto the defensive against Wolseley's reforming zeal. Wolseley recognised the threat he posed to the Duke: 'He is always afraid that I shall adopt some public method of ventilating my views, and he feels that they are so commonplace, and based on common sense, so practical that he could not resist them: public opinion would force him to accept them'.[1] The government was appalled at Wolseley's shameless use of opportunities to give speeches at banquets, in which he appeared to criticise government policy. This latter point is best demonstrated by the invasion scare of 1887-8 which Wolseley deliberately manufactured because, although he was genuinely convinced of Britain's vulnerability to invasion, he wanted to stir up public concern to such a degree so as to force the government into further examination of the question. This topic will be touched on only briefly here but will be analysed in greater detail in a later chapter.[2] The long term effect of voicing the army's problems in public is hard to assess but an attempt will be made to contrast the public view of the army with that of the navy, and to establish which branch of the service was more successful in mobilising public opinion and why.

Serving army officers were not totally restricted from speaking in public but they were

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1 Journal, 19 July 1878, WO147/6
2 See chapter 7.

supposed to speak on a limited number of subjects. It was quite acceptable, for instance. to write about a visit to a foreign army: Wolseley wrote an article for Blackwood's Magazine on his visit to General Lee's headquarters. Campaign histories were acceptable, and two members of Wolseley's 'Ring', Butler and Brackenbury were particularly active in this respect. Wolseley himself wrote a campaign history of the 1860 war with China. Biographies were deemed another suitable subject for serving officers: while Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, Wolseley wrote the Life of the Duke of Marlborough, and a biography of Napoleon.[3] Men like Sir Patrick MacDougall and Sir John Adye wrote many articles for the periodicals on various aspects of the army; these encountered no criticism because they were seen by the public as the individual views of the officers concerned and not an official viewpoint which might be confused with the often differing opinions of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge.

One of Wolseley's most provocative articles, 'Our Military Requirements', for Macmillan's Magazine in 1871, drew little comment at the time because, although Wolseley was at headquarters, he was not yet seen by the public as the leader of the reform school. Nevertheless the article contained statements and suggestions which, had Wolseley written it later in his career, would have caused an uproar within the War Office and government. For example he publicised the lack of a government policy on defence, and called the MPs 'clap-trap orators'. He voiced the opinion, often to be repeated later with more effect, that Britain was open to invasion and that London was undefended. Taken as a whole the article represents the nearest Wolseley ever got to putting his own individual reform programme into words and before the public. The public ignored it because his name was known only as the commander of an unimportant campaign in Canada. Wolseley himself recognised this, and an element of his determination to succeed in his later campaigns stemmed from the fact that 'I should then have the ear of the public sufficiently to ensure the reforms I advocated being carried out'.[4]

Wolseley wrote to the Queen in 1885 'No Government, Whig or Tory, has the honesty to

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[3] Wolseley, 'Visit to Confederate Headquarters'; G.J. Wolseley, Narrative of the War in China, (London, 1862); G.J. Wolseley, The Life of the Duke of Marlborough, 1650-1702 (London, 1894); G.J. Wolseley, The Decline and Fall of Napoleon, (London, 1895)

[4] Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements'; Journal, 24 May 1879, WO147/7

tell the people the truth and take them into their confidence on army and navy matters'.[5] That was Wolseley's justification for criticising the government in public. He found support for this opinion from an unusual quarter: in the 1890s Arnold-Forster was often critical of Wolseley and the army system he supported, but admitted that 'there will be no real interest taken in the question of army reform in the House of Commons until the general public outside the House of Commons shows that it was in earnest, and insists upon something being done'.[6] This suggests that Wolseley was right to put his case in public, though he was arguably less correct in the methods he used.

To a limited degree Wolseley did accept the Queen's and Duke's arguments that such public airing of differences could damage the army. For example, while in South Africa in 1880 he began writing an article on promotion which he himself recognised as too plainspoken for publication and therefore abandoned. Indeed, he had already published an article on military staffs anonymously. He also deprecated the attempts of other members of his 'Ring' to speak on military affairs: he felt that Baker Russell should not have written a letter to the Daily News about the conduct of the Zulu War, and in 1885 when describing Wood as a third-rate general listed his manipulation of the press as one of his faults.[7]

Once Wolseley was appointed Quartermaster-General in 1880 his situation changed. He was now a senior officer at the Horse Guards subject to the discipline of his superior the Duke. The Duke took his role as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army very seriously: he was the principal adviser to the Secretary of State for War and he was the person who it was assumed would be the spokesman for the military on all controversial aspects of reform. But there is little doubt that the Duke was not in tune with the army reforms forced on the army by Cardwell and shortly to be further developed by the new Secretary of State Childers, whereas Wolseley was. Therefore Wolseley would attempt to justify his public utterances on the grounds that, 'Were I to hold other language in public, or to be entirely silent, on what my experience tells me are points of vital importance to the State, I should not feel that I was acting honestly by the Army or by my

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5 Wolseley to Queen, 22 March 1885, quoted in Buckle, Vol. 3, 2nd series, p632
6 H.O. Arnold-Forster, The War Office, The Army, and the Empire, (London, 1900) p3
7 G.J. Wolseley, 'Military Staff Systems Abroad and in England', Macmillans, Vol. XXXVII, (Feb. 1878) pp323-335, authorship confirmed by The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, Toronto, (1966); Journal, 11 Jan. 1880; 2 March 1880, WO147/7; Journal, 22 Aug. 1884, WO147/8

country which pays me'.[8] The Duke on the other hand felt strongly that if an officer opposed the Duke's own views then he was insubordinate, but power and the public's readiness to listen were of no real consequence if an officer voiced the Duke's own opinions.

At no point does this become clearer than when considering the different treatment meted out by the Duke to Roberts. Roberts returned to England in November 1880 as the victor of the Second Afghan War and, as a result, was invited to address a large illustrious body at the Mansion House on 14 February 1881. Here the Duke, in introducing Roberts to his audience, which included Wolseley, gave Roberts leave to speak the truth about the state of the army as he saw it. Like Wolseley, Roberts made clear his reasons for speaking: 'it will not be possible to avoid treading upon debatable ground...[but] I am actuated simply by a sincere and honest desire to place my countrymen in possession of the truth about their army...'. Roberts went on to make several points which demonstrated that his views were at variance with those of the government: he claimed that the linking and localisation of regiments was contrary to *esprit de corps*; that men were being moved from one regiment to another with little or no concern for their personal wishes; and that the Second Afghan War had demonstrated that the army needed men not boys. He further made clear his opinion 'that we are sacrificing our army to obtain a reserve', and spoke in favour of creating two armies, one for long service abroad, and a short service quasi-militia for home service and the production of a reserve.[9]

All these views were in direct contradiction to the spirit and substance of the Cardwell reforms and the ongoing Childers reforms. No controversy arose from these public statements and no known reprimand was given to Roberts by the Duke of Cambridge. Criticism must, however, have come from some quarter, probably the government, because Roberts felt obliged to explain and amplify his views in an article in the November 1882 issue of Nineteenth Century. He wrote 'it never occurred to me that the old system of long service could be reverted to...What I desired to show was, that no trial, however lengthened, could be satisfactory, unless due consideration were given to the results of practical experience in the field.'[10] Roberts also gave a definition of

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8 Wolseley to Cambridge, Jan. 1889, quoted in Life of Wolseley, p230
9 The Times, 15 Feb. 1881
10 F. Roberts, 'The Present State of the Army', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XII, No. 69, (Nov. 1882), pp633-

what he considered to be an 'old' soldier as 'a man of between five and twelve years' service', and admitted that once a man was over 30 years old he was of little good as a private soldier. Wolseley would certainly have agreed with this definition, but at the War Office, he was concerned with the problem of how to obtain enough recruits, whilst Roberts, in India, was concerned only about how to use them.

The difference between the official treatment of Roberts, who returned to India to become the Commander-in-Chief there, and that accorded to Wolseley's article 'Long and Short Service' in the March 1881 issue of Nineteenth Century, is very marked. In this article Wolseley, it must be said, set out to be deliberately controversial. He started his article by saying that 'all armies and navies are naturally conservative in their tendencies, and consequently view with great suspicion any changes effected by a Liberal Government'. After contrasting the failing of the long service system and outlining the benefits of short service he made a spirited attack on regimental officers, 'in endeavouring to account for the dislike with which short service is generally viewed in the army, the fact that it adds very considerably to the daily work of regimental officers must not be forgotten'. Now these officers must become instructors as in the German Army and 'many hours of idleness daily, the long periods of leave, must be abandoned'. Wolseley admitted that the need for volunteers from a number of regiments to make one up to full strength for active service was a problem but voiced the hope that once the Reserve was fully established the problem would disappear because volunteers would be called upon from it and not from regiments of the line.[11]

The author of an article in the May 1881 issue of Blackwood's Magazine contrasted Roberts's speech with Wolseley's article and with a degree of truth suggested that 'Sir Frederick looks at the point from within, Sir Garnet views it from without, the profession, and it must be said that if the army hangs on the words of Sir Frederick with delight...the words of Sir Garnet are nevertheless more likely to prevail'.[12] Furthermore this author and others suggested that Wolseley's real crime was less his defence of a flawed system but that he 'treats the profession to

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11 G.J. Wolseley, 'Long and Short Service', Nineteenth Century, Vol. IX, No. 49 (March 1881), pp558-72

12 C. Raleigh Chichester, 'Short Service & its Supporters', Blackwood's Magazine, Vol. CXXIX, No. 787, (May 1881), pp591-601. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index.

which he has the honour of belonging with very considerable scorn'. Perhaps Wolseley saw some truth in the idea that he was a soldier mixing with politicians on reform whereas Roberts was speaking from direct and very recent practical experience, and therefore Wolseley deliberately exaggerated his opinion of the regimental officers in his despatches from Egypt in 1882. This apparent irony was not lost on the author of an article in July 1883 who gleefully repeated Wolseley's statement that 'had he not known of what stuff the regimental officers were made, he would not have attempted to attack Tel-el- Kebir as he did', and wanted to know at what point Wolseley had changed his mind.[13] It is, however, unlikely that Wolseley had actually changed his opinions. The point which Wolseley was consistently trying to make was that regimental officers in times of peace were idle but when given a concrete aim on active service they then worked very hard. In other words Wolseley wanted to see the professionalism displayed on active service continued in barracks at home.

In 1880 the Liberal party returned to office and Childers was appointed Secretary of State for War. He was determined to complete the Cardwell reforms by establishing, among other things, linked battalions and localisation; Wolseley was seen as an ideal ally. The conservatives in the House of Lords had been so vociferous in opposition to the Cardwell reforms that it had been necessary to abolish purchase by an Order-in-Council. Childers wanted to ensure that his reforms would not encounter the same rough passage and therefore asked Gladstone to seek the Queen's permission to raise Wolseley to a peerage so that he could act as the government spokesman for army reform in the House of Lords. In March 1881 Gladstone asked the Queen to make Wolseley a peer. He had no doubt that it would prove a controversial request: in conversation with his private secretary Edward Hamilton, Gladstone described the proposal as 'a nasty pill for Her'. It was one which the Queen was not prepared to swallow without a fight. There was a precedent for Gladstone's action: in 1870 he had asked the Queen to make Sir William Mansfield a peer, Lord Sandhurst, specifically to assist in the process of army reform, and she had done so.[14]

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13 W.E. Montague, 'Red-Hot Reform', Blackwood's Magazine, Vol. CXXXIV, No. 813, (July 1883), pp66-87. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index.

14 Diary, 3 March 1881, quoted in D.W.R. Bahlman, (ed.), The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, Vol. 1, p112; Notes for autobiography, WPP SSL8

There were two main arguments against raising Wolseley to the peerage: firstly, the Duke did not want Wolseley in the House of Lords at all; and, secondly, there was the danger that by making the Quartermaster General a peer it might become a political office. The Duke based his opposition to Wolseley on the charge that Wolseley was insubordinate, and that his use of the press and his public speeches were undermining the Duke's role as head of the army. If Wolseley were admitted to the House of Lords, where the Duke sat and spoke as the Commander-in-Chief, who could predict what mischief Wolseley could get up to when speaking to such a body? The matter did not simply stop with the threat of Wolseley himself, but extended into a general dispute over who was actually the head of the British Army. The Queen's private secretary, Ponsonby, wrote to Childers that the Queen accepted without question the Duke's charge that Wolseley was insubordinate. Gladstone received a similar missive and described it to Earl Granville, the Foreign Secretary, as 'a "no surrender" - "non possumus" - nail the colours to the mast, break the bridges and burn the boats, letter!'[15] On 4 March 1881 Childers replied that he had 'watched Sir Garnet Wolseley's conduct narrowly since I became Secretary of State' and had found 'his behaviour has been most becoming both to myself as the Head of the Department, and to his Royal Highness as his immediate superior'. On the same day he further pointed out to Gladstone when forwarding Ponsonby's letter and his own reply that 'if His Royal Highness had any complaint against a subordinate officer to which he wished Her Majesty's attention to be drawn, he should have submitted the matter to me'.[16] He had not done so but had made use of his connection with the Royal Family. Therefore Childers concluded, and would do so again later in the year, that the differences between the Duke and Wolseley rested on personal grounds and that the charge of insubordination had no foundation.

On the question of whether Wolseley should continue serving as Quartermaster General while a peer Childers had little sympathy for the position of the Duke and the Queen. He reported to Gladstone on 7 March that he had warned the Duke that the imposition of such a condition would be 'a very dangerous precedent... as it would mean that no Peer could be employed at Head

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15 Gladstone to Granville, 5 March 1881, Gladstone Papers, BM 44173
16 Childers to Ponsonby, 4 March 1881, Childers Papers, Royal Commonwealth Library, 5/21; Childers to Gladstone, 4 March 1881, 5/22

Quarters'.[17] Gladstone made the same point in a memorandum to the Cabinet in which he pointed out that many senior officers were rewarded with peerages for services rendered and that to forbid them to hold high positions at the War Office would have the effect of dangerously reducing the size of the pool from which such appointments could be made. The Queen, while refusing to take a step that might politicise the army, was prepared to accept that the government needed support in the House of Lords and therefore suggested that Sir Neville Chamberlain might be a suitable man to assist the government.[18]

The real point of contention was that if Wolseley were admitted to the House of Lords and remained in the office of Quartermaster General, the members of the Lords and the public would be in a position to judge for themselves the opposing positions on army reform held by a senior officer and the Commander-in-Chief. The Duke was naturally very concerned that the public might side with Wolseley against him. The matter dragged on into May leading Edward Hamilton to conclude that the whole proposal had been a mistake 'and it is worth considering whether the admission of a mistake would not be better than pursuing a matter which the Sovereign strongly disapproves, which the Army would resent, and which the House of Lords would not welcome'.[19] Gladstone was deeply committed to the peerage question and even threatened to resign if the Queen refused to accept his recommendation. Granville urged caution over the use of this threat because more serious issues might arise in the future 'and threats of resignation ought not to be frequent'.[20]

The depth of Wolseley's commitment to army reform and his recognition of the importance of mobilising the public are at no point clearer than when considering the proposal he put forward after the government had all but abandoned the chance of making him a peer. On hearing of the postponement of the matter, due to the need for the government to concentrate its attention on the Land War in Ireland, Wolseley indicated to Childers that he was prepared to resign as Quartermaster General, a post he felt was 'a sinecure' with little real power or use since

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17 Childers to Gladstone, 7 March 1881, 5/25
18 Memo. for the Cabinet, Gladstone, 24 March 1881, BM44765; Hamilton Diary, 3 April 1881, p124
19 Hamilton Diary, 26 May 1881, p141
20 Granville to Gladstone, 27 April 1881, BM 44173

the changes of 1871-2, and accept a peerage and the position of Governor-General of Gibraltar in succession to Lord Charles Napier, in order to be free to support the government in the House of Lords.[21] This proposal was declined on the grounds that Wolseley had not realised that Napier still had another year to serve in Gibraltar, and that such a posting would effectively end Wolseley's career as an active fighting general. Rather than send Wolseley to Gibraltar, Childers suggested to Gladstone that John Morley might be promoted from his existing position as Under Secretary for War, and a seat found for Wolseley to replace him.[22] With his attention distracted by Ireland Gladstone preferred to let the matter rest as it was. Nevertheless the proposal demonstrated that Wolseley was prepared to abandon his attempts to reform the army from within the War Office and instead to concentrate his attention on publicising the cause of reform in the House of Lords where he would get more publicity. He believed that if he held such a minor position as that of Gibraltar the Duke would have less ground for complaint.

The result of the successful thwarting of the government's proposal by the Duke and Queen was that when in September 1881 Wolseley's name was put forward as the successor to Charles Ellice as Adjutant General, the government was prepared to fight. As Edward Hamilton noted in his diary,

> Mr. G. thinks that where there are personal objections and recommendations only; much weight may be given to reason, or even unreason of the Sovereign; but when there are reasons of public policy closely involved, then he holds that for a Prime Minister to give way is an abandonment of duty and a commencement of the process of sapping the constitution.[23]

That 'reasons of public policy' were involved there can be little doubt. One method of securing a slowing down of the reform process was for the Duke to surround himself with like minded conservatives in high office. Childers, in replying to the Duke's refusal to accept Wolseley as Adjutant General, pointed out that the two last appointments to the War Office, of Deputy Adjutants General of the Royal Artillery and of the Royal Engineers, had both been given to men of the old school opposed to short service.[24] Again the Duke mobilised the Royal Family to his

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21 Wolseley to Childers, 23 Aug. 1881, Childers Papers, 5/37
22 Childers to Gladstone, 28 Aug. 1881, 5/40; Childers to Gladstone, 4 Sept. 1881, 5/42; Childers to Gladstone, 12 Sept. 1881, 5/47
23 Hamilton diary, 28 Sept. 1881, p171-2
24 Childers to Cambridge, 13 Sept. 1881, Childers Papers, 5/48. The men were Maj.-Gen. Sir C.G.

defence. The Queen was, at least to begin with, willing to throw her weight behind the Duke and, when the Duke threatened resignation over the issue, the Prince of Wales gave him his wholehearted support.[25]

The Duke fought hard to oppose Wolseley's appointment. He put forward the argument that Wolseley was not the best qualified for the post and proposed Sir Lintorn Simmons instead. Simmons was unacceptable to the government because he had allied himself with the conservative officers by pressing for retrograde measures while sitting on the Airey Committee. The Duke argued that the new Adjutant General should be a man he could trust and said of Wolseley that 'I could never feel that confidence in him, which is essential in the interests of the Public Service as well as to my own comfort and even usefulness as a public officer, should exist between the Commander-in-Chief and his right hand man the Adjutant General'. Childers could only repeat the arguments put forward earlier 'that the Adjutant General should be an officer known to the Army to be of the new, and not of the old school'.[26]

The Duke complained to the Queen that Wolseley's use of the press would be a danger to himself, the Duke, and to the army because it would become politicised. The Queen sympathised with this argument and she closely questioned every visiting Cabinet Minister in order to find a solution to the problem which would be acceptable to both the Duke and the government. Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, wrote to Gladstone from Balmoral that 'She is quite conscious that the Duke has put himself out of court by the ground he has taken up and the reasons he has given for his objection to Sir Garnet's appointment'. Gladstone replied to Harcourt that the Queen was making things worse 'by multiplying channels of communication'. One suggestion was taken seriously, that Roberts should become Quartermaster General and Wolseley Adjutant General in order to have representatives of both schools in the War Office.[27]

Arburthnot, R.A. and Col. Sir J. Stokes, R.E.

[25] Prince of Wales to the Queen, 10 Nov. 1881 quoted in Sir S. Lee, King Edward VII, (London, 1925), Vol. I, p557

[26] Childers to Hartington, 4 Sept. 1881, Devonshire Papers, 340.1115; Childers to Cambridge, 13 Sept. 1881, Childers Papers, 5/48; Cambridge to Childers, 24 Sept. 1881, RA E/1/9756; Hartington to Cambridge, 26 Sept. 1881, RA E/1/9761; Childers to Cambridge, 28 Sept. 1881, 5/62

[27] Harcourt to Gladstone, 23 Oct. 1881, Childers Papers 5/89; Gladstone to Harcourt, 25 Oct. 1881, quoted in A.G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt, (London, 1923) p416; Ponsonby to Childers, 20 Sept. 1881, 5/55; Childers to the Queen, 12 Oct. 1881, 5/68; Childers to Cambridge, 13 Oct. 1881, 5/71

Two further points remained to be cleared up: firstly, the exact role of the Adjutant General and the Commander-in-Chief, and secondly, Wolseley's habit of speaking in public. The first point was only raised because of an article in The Times in early November announcing Wolseley's appointment as Adjutant General and hinting strongly that there would be a change in the relationship between the Adjutant General and the Commander-in-Chief giving the former more power.[28] There was no foundation for such an announcement and, after an agitated correspondence with the Queen, the government was forced to issue the official appointment of Wolseley as Adjutant General accompanied by a disclaimer denying that any change in the roles was planned.

The Queen remained unhappy that the Duke had been forced to accept Wolseley as Adjutant General. In 1885 she wrote to the new Secretary of State, W.H. Smith, that she was surprised to read in the press that Wolseley was returning from the Sudan to his post at the War Office. Smith replied that although the statement in the press had been unauthorised this was indeed the case; Smith had to submit to the 'undertaking upon which I am told he was appointed to the command in Egypt, viz., that he should be at liberty to return to the Horse Guards'. Therefore there were no grounds on which Wolseley could be removed from office legitimately.[29]

The question of public speaking and writing was less easy to solve satisfactorily. When Wolseley's peerage had been under discussion the Duke had sought an assurance from Wolseley that he would not speak in public, citing the case of Lord Tenterden who as P.U.S. had never taken his seat in the House. Wolseley's reply on that occasion was indicative of his whole approach:

> the case was in no way analogous: he could not speak without taking a party side... with me it was different, for I should speak only upon military subjects, which were entirely removed from the sphere of politics. That if I spoke in favour of breechloaders and supposing His Royal Highness did not approve of them, it could only be the expression of two opinions upon a professional matter, and that no scandal could possibly arise from any such difference of opinion...[30]

The Duke disagreed, probably fearing that the voicing of any difference of professional opinion in

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28 The Times, 10 Nov. 1881
29 Ponsonby to Smith, 7 Aug. 1885; Smith to Ponsonby, 8 Aug. 1885, Smith Papers, WO110/1
30 Notes for Autobiography, WPP SSL8

public might lead to his opinion being disregarded with fearful consequences for his authority as the Commander-in-Chief. Before his appointment as Adjutant General Childers was forced to exact from Wolseley a promise that he would not 'write articles in the press or magazines, or make speeches on military affairs opposed to the Duke's views'.[31] This was an oral assurance and did not satisfy the Duke who asked Childers to demand that Wolseley should put his promise in writing. Time would show that Wolseley had absolutely no intention of obeying this injunction: in fact, his future position could best be described as in accordance with the promise he had made to Childers in April 'that he would be as reticent on subjects in which he differed from His Royal Highness as the Duke is on subjects in which he differs from the Government'.[32]

If Wolseley was to be denied a public platform on which to air his views on military affairs there remained one further forum in which he was shortly to become entitled to speak. In September 1882 Wolseley was given a peerage 'for distinguished services in the field' after the campaign in Egypt. At first he appeared to be more concerned with the pension which should accompany it rather than with the potentially powerful position he now held of being in the public eye as the commander of a successful campaign, and of being a member of the House of Lords where he could speak openly. No records have been found to suggest that the Duke ordered Wolseley not to take up his seat but the fact that Wolseley did not take it up until reluctantly forced to do so in 1888, in order to defend himself against an personal attack made by Lord Salisbury, suggests that some such order must have been made.

Wolseley had been given permission as Adjutant General to make after dinner speeches and he made use of this apparent freedom to the full. In July 1883 Hartington reprimanded him for his speech in Dublin in which The Times had reported that Wolseley had called for Irish regiments to be commanded by Irish officers. The government feared that this statement could be manipulated by Irish nationalists for their own ends. Wolseley replied that he had thought that 'what I had said would tend to strengthen the hands of the government, and it certainly never occurred to me that it could in any way react upon the discipline of the army'. Wolseley had not

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31 Childers to Gladstone, 12 Nov. 1881, Childers Papers, 5/117

32 Childers to Hartington, 12 April 1882, Devonshire Papers, 340.1142; Childers to Granville, 4 April 1881, 5/33

sought to make a political statement, he continued to say that in his opinion Scottish regiments should be commanded by Scots and Welsh by the Welsh.[33]

In July 1887 Wolseley incurred Stanhope's displeasure with his speech on the administration of the War Office. Wolseley tried to reassure Stanhope that this was not a personal attack on Stanhope's tenure of office but an attempt to bring about an improvement in existing unsatisfactory practices: 'Unless public opinion is with us in our endeavour to bring about a better system, we can hope for no improvement. It is only be taking the public into our confidence we can secure public opinion. Hence my humble attempt to point out some of our most glaring red-tapisms'.[34] Wolseley was referring to the excessive centralisation within the War Office, a defect which the Hartington Commission would later attempt to remedy.

In April 1888 Wolseley surpassed himself with the controversy which arose from his speech after a dinner given to the industrialist Sir John Pender. In the course of this speech he said:

> The answer to the question why the Army and Navy are not as strong as they ought to be is to be found in the system of our Government by party - that curse of modern England which is sapping and undermining the foundations of our country, which is depriving our statesmen of the manly honesty which was once their characteristic. What do we see when any new Administration comes into office? What directly takes place? It is the same with all Parties. The first thing is the endeavour made by the Minister in Office to obtain some clap-trap reputation by cutting down the expenses of the Army and Navy.[35]

Wolseley's speech had been made in response to a speech by the Under Secretary of State for War, Brodrick, at Guildford in which he had claimed that the responsibility for an efficient army rested firmly with the military authorities.[36] At Sir John Pender's dinner Wolseley replied that they could take no such responsibility so long as they were starved of men and money.

Stanhope demanded an explanation from the Duke and asked him to reprimand Wolseley. The Duke did so in a letter he later quoted from to the House of Lords. Wolseley replied to this that he did not realise

> that any exception could be taken by Her Majesty's Government to an officer like

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33 Wolseley to Hartington, 6 July 1883, Devonshire Papers, 340.1368
34 Wolseley to Stanhope, 31 July 1887, Stanhope Papers, 0314
35 The Times, 26 April 1888
36 The Times, 2 Feb. 1888

> myself, who does not hold a political appointment, expressing his views in the most open way upon what he conceives to be the great faults of our constitution. I made no attack of any sort or kind upon the Government now in office, nor upon any member of it. I attributed our shortcomings to the vicious system of party government...[37]

Although the Duke was forced to give Wolseley a written reprimand, in private he told Wolseley that although he should not have said what he did, he agreed broadly with his remarks.

Salisbury made a strong attack on Wolseley for abusing his powers as Adjutant General by stirring up trouble and ended his speech to the House of Lords 'If he thinks his duty forces him to make such statements as these, let him come down here and make them, and we will answer them'.[38] Wolseley wrote to Salisbury that he had been disturbed by Salisbury's personal attack on him and that 'had I known of your intention, I should not have failed to have been in my place in the House of Lords'. Wolseley duly came to the Lords and, after having assured the government that he was not speaking of any one government or minister but in general, but of the system as a whole, he added his justification for his speech:

> Experience tells me... that it is absolutely impossible for any Secretary of State for War to obtain for the Army all that it requires, unless the English people are at his back - unless public opinion supports him...Panic is the offspring of ignorance. For the people to realise their danger, and the power of meeting it, is, in my opinion, the first step towards doing all that is required.[39]

Wolseley placed great trust in the people and unlike Salisbury did not believe that by publicising the dangers to the country he was weakening it any further because 'there is no deficiency or weak point in our defences which is not well known to the Military and Naval Authorities of every great foreign nation as it is to ourselves...'.

Now apparently welcomed by Lord Salisbury into the House of Lords, Wolseley soon allied himself with the Duke of Cambridge to take part in a debate on a motion proposed by the Earl of Wemyss on 29 June 1888 that the House welcomed the government's recent proposals to secure the defences of the country and of the Empire. It must be noted, however, that the government only made these proposals under pressure after Wolseley and the Duke had made it publicly known that Britain was vulnerable to invasion. This debate provides a relatively rare

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37 Wolseley to Cambridge, 27 April 1888, Devonshire Papers, 0314
38 Salisbury to House of Lords, 11 May 1888, Hansard, Vol. CCCXXVI
39 Wolseley to House of Lords, 14 May 1888, ibid.; Wolseley to Salisbury, 12 May 1888, Salisbury Papers

example of public co-operation between Wolseley and the Duke against the government of the day. Wolseley spoke before the Duke, repeating the often-quoted allegation of 'the possibility of 100,000 men being landed on our shores in a very short time from across the Channel for the purpose of capturing London'.[40] This was in direct contrast to the assurance given by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton, in the House of Commons, that the Admiralty would have adequate notice of any threat of invasion because of the great naval preparations France would need to make. It is not intended to go into the details of this argument here because it will be dealt with in a later chapter, but it is sufficient to say that this speech publicised fundamental differences between the views on home defence held by the Admiralty and the War Office. The Duke allowed Wolseley to cover the technical side of the question and restricted himself to a plea to the government to formulate a statement of the military requirements of the Empire for which the military authorities could then make adequate contingency plans. This was in itself a controversial request and one which governments of both parties consistently strove to avoid carrying out.

Salisbury obviously repented of his invitation to Wolseley to speak in the House of Lords because by the time Wolseley became the Commander-in-Chief in 1895 he was not welcome in the Lords. The situation had altered in two ways: firstly, for the first time since the reorganisation of 1870-1 the Secretary of State for War sat in the Lords; and secondly, the government was under pressure from outside as well as from within Parliament to make its position clear on the use of professional military advisers. Lord Lansdowne's appointment as the Secretary of State appeared to suggest that the government had a military adviser already present in the Lords and that, in consequence, Wolseley's intervention in army debates would not be necessary. This was not the case, however, because Lansdowne had never served as a soldier. He had served as the P.U.S. in the War Office under Cardwell, but his most recent contact with military affairs had come from his contact with military advisers while Viceroy of India. Therefore he had little experience of the reformed British Army at home.

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40 Wolseley to House of Lords, 29 June 1888, Hansard, Third Series, Vol. CCCXXVII; Stanhope would have preferred Wolseley not to speak but as he wrote to Salisbury he had no justification for preventing him. Stanhope to Salisbury, 29 June 1888, Salisbury Papers

Outside Parliament opinion was growing among civilian army reformers that the government needed professional advice on all decisions relating to military affairs. In a letter to Gladstone, Salisbury, the Duke of Devonshire, Arthur Balfour, and Joseph Chamberlain on 12 February 1894, Dilke, George Chesney, Arnold-Forster, and Spenser Wilkinson attempted to reconcile constitutional government with 'a system of defence...shaped with a view to war' which called upon the government not only to tell Parliament what the preparations were but 'who are the professional advisers upon whose judgement the Government relies'. The offices of the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War should be amalgamated, and one officer per service should be appointed as professional advisers to the Cabinet.[41] Wolseley had himself made a very similar suggestion in his evidence to the Hartington Commission, and the commissioners' reaction had been to suppress the evidence.[42]

Within Parliament, supporters of professionals were active. In a debate on the strength and organisation of home defence in 1900 the Earl of Rosebery noted that 'there has not been one single sentence from the noble Viscount the Commander-in-Chief assuring us that we were amply prepared for all contingencies...I should be more satisfied, my Lords, with one single speech from the noble Viscount than with a thousand speeches to the Primrose League [by Salisbury]...'.[43] Lansdowne's reply made two points: firstly, that all his recent speeches on the militia and the Volunteers had been based, often textually, on the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief; and secondly, that to bring him into the House of Lords would be 'to turn your Commander-in-Chief into something like a political partisan'. Salisbury in his turn made what was probably closest to the true position of the government: 'Now it is obvious that if Lord Wolseley could be called upon to do that, he must do it with the admission that he was entitled, if he liked, to say he did not approve of the plans of Lord Lansdowne'.[44] In other words, Salisbury feared a repeat of the debate over home defence when it was clear that the professional advisers differed from the

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41 Quoted in S. Gwyn & G.M. Tuckwell, The Life of Sir Charles Dilke, (London, 1917), Vol. II, pp416-9

42 Hamer, p52; Wolseley's evidence to the Hartington Commission can be found in his private papers. WPP MEM/3; For further information on the position of professional advisers in government committees see F.A. Johnson, Defence By Committee, (London, 1960)

43 Rosebery to House of Lords, 27 July 1900, Hansard, Fourth Series, Vol. LXXXVI

44 Lansdowne to House of Lords, ibid.; Salisbury to House of Lords, ibid.

parliamentarians. That Wolseley would have used the House of Lords to voice his differences there can be little doubt. In the first place he would have publicised his differences with the government over the need to send reinforcements to Natal before the negotiations with the Boers broke down. Furthermore, Wolseley would have publicised the iniquitous position the Commander-in-Chief filled in the War Office since the Order-in-Council of 1895: he did so only after his retirement, in a speech in March 1901.

Apart from occasional direct attacks on the government, such as the speech at Sir John Pender's dinner, Wolseley rarely provoked the government into making a response. Yet he was never loath to make unsubtle hints that parsimonious governments were much to blame for the weakness of the British Army and the deficiencies in the defences of the Empire. What he resented most was that not only did the government ignore the advice of its military advisers, but that they would publicly question the truth of their statements on the state of the defences, and furthermore dispute the right of these officers to tell the public the truth. Wolseley was prepared to risk unpopularity with the government and make public the fact that the army was too small to fulfil all its obligations and also the glaring deficiencies in its equipment. In 1888 Wolseley was unjustly accused of writing a scaremongering article in the Daily Telegraph which claimed that the British Army had the worst field guns in the world. Wolseley had been pressing Stanhope on this point for some time but he was not the author of this article. He did however publicly admit the shortage of equipment; in 1887 he wrote that if two army corps were despatched abroad and the existing garrison in Ireland retained, there would be only 24 field guns left in England.[45] In 1889 Wolseley told the 20th Middlesex Volunteers that although the Volunteers were now about to get the new magazine rifle, the extra half million rifles needed for stores would not be available because the government would not spend the money. He described his ongoing battles with the civilian officials in the War Office in these terms: 'as we are said to be a poor country whenever military or naval matters are concerned, whenever I ask for anything I always feel like a poor relation when he asks his rich friend to help him'.[46]

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[45] Wolseley, 'The Army',
[46] The Times, 11 Feb. 1889

On other occasions Wolseley publicly voiced his belief that the government was downright treacherous in its neglect of vital national defences. It was foolish not to prepare for war on the sole ground that Britain had no offensive intentions towards other powers. During the Eastern Crisis of 1877-8 Wolseley wrote in despair that 'some of our ablest men who have been in power have lately told us emphatically, even when war is hanging in the balance, that it will be high time to prepare for war when it has been declared'.[47] An army could not be created in a day, nor could fixed defences. When he was in Liverpool in 1887 to unveil a statue to General Earle, Wolseley told his audience that he was appalled to see that the Liverpool docks had no defences against foreign attack: 'he thought to himself how undefended all that wealth was and what an immense temptation it would be in the event of war'. He was convinced that Britain was vulnerable to invasion and felt it was his duty to tell the public of their vulnerability in order to pressurise the government into rectifying the situation. This subject will be covered further in a later chapter.[48]

Despite his promise not to conflict in public with the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley did make statements in public on matters which fell properly into the Commander-in-Chief's compass. Wolseley was convinced that short service was popular within the army and an aim of the reform had been 'that of removing the unpopularity of the army with the classes from which we must look for recruits'. Furthermore he cited in February 1890 the case of the Foot Guards where the numbers had a few years before fallen sharply 'so the period of service with the colours was reduced to three years, and with the best results. The brigade filled up to its establishment within a few months'.[49] A critic in Blackwood's Magazine in 1884 wrote that Wolseley may be constantly preaching the success of short service in terms of quantity but was concealing from the public the drop in the quality of these recruits in terms of their height and chest measurements. This was undoubtedly true but Wolseley did in fact admit in public his concern about the inexperience of NCOs, arguing in public and in private that their rates of pay and terms of service should be increased in order to encourage them to re-enlist rather than join the Reserve immediately on the

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47 G.J. Wolseley, 'England as a Military Power in 1854 and in 1878', Nineteenth Century, Vol. III, No. 13, (March 1878), pp433-56

48 The Times, 17 Dec. 1887

49 'Long and Short Service'; G.J. Wolseley, 'The Standing Army of Great Britain', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LXXX, No. 477, (Feb. 1890), pp331-47

expiration of their term of service in the colours. For example in the article quoted above he had voiced this opinion but pointed out that 'to enable this to be done, a solid increase to the pay of the private soldier is indispensable. Without such increase we can never hope to compete for the best men in the open labour market'. He had previously expanded this point in a speech to undergraduates in Oxford; he wanted to be able to draw recruits from 'the same class of men as those from whom the police were drawn. The matter was simply one of £.s.d.'.[50]

Throughout his career Wolseley dismissed the usefulness of training men in parade ground manoeuvres which would have no place on the modern battlefield. The Duke of Cambridge thoroughly enjoyed the public parades and failed to understand how the new weapons had altered the nature of modern warfare. Wolseley's views received publicity even when apparently made to a private body; for example his comments on Colonel Brackenbury's paper to the Royal United Services Institute were reported in The Times. On this occasion Wolseley was in direct contradiction to the established War Office statements on drill: 'in drill as generally taught in nearly all armies, and certainly in ours, the order of what he thought should be the method of training was reversed'. Drill taught the theory of what war ought to be, Wolseley wanted to take the 'actual circumstances of battle from the time of the first shot being fired, find out the duties required of the men in action, and then work back from that point to instruct the soldiers'. Wolseley's opinions had some effect; he could report to the North London Rifle Corps in February 1889 that the new drill book was excellent 'if it were read carefully and between the lines', and was very similar to the French and German drill books.[51]

Wolseley was a constant advocate of selection for officers and he made his views public in the full knowledge that the Duke was equally firmly wedded to the current practice of promotion by seniority. In his speech to the Institution of Civil Engineers on 5 December 1882 Wolseley contrasted the quality of the officers who had recently held commands in the Egyptian campaign with those who had landed in the Crimea in 1854. He believed that the great improvement in the quality of staff officers was due to the fact that since 1854 Britain had been involved in many small

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50 P.D. Trotter, 'Lord Wolseley's "Men"', Blackwoods Magazine, Vol. CXXXV, No. 821, (March 1884), pp394-9. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index; The Times, 13 May 1889

51 The Times, 12 May 1883; The Times, 22 Feb. 1889

wars 'and we had been able to eliminate [sic] the good officers from the bad and to select the best men'. Furthermore professionalism had finally been rewarded; whereas in the Crimea no officer of the Engineers or Artillery held the command of a brigade or division, in Egypt twelve of the 25 staff at headquarters and a number of higher commands had been filled by officers from the Engineers and Artillery.[52] Queen Victoria was outraged because she believed that all the officers in her army were good and, like the Duke, refused to countenance the idea that officers should be appointed by selection. Wolseley's reply began with a typical defence that 'the newspaper reports of my speech...were very poor and inaccurate'.[53] Because Wolseley did not prepare his speeches in advance there is no way of telling exactly what he said on this and many other occasions. Wolseley did, however, attempt to justify his comments, re-stating that formerly 'the most highly-educated - in a military and scientific point of view' had been excluded from higher commands.

The defence of being misquoted could not be used in connection with Wolseley's articles. Stanhope asked the Duke for his opinion as to whether he thought that the Adjutant General should write these articles on military matters. The Duke replied that he did not. This question arose because of Wolseley's series of articles in the Fortnightly Review in 1888-89 which were generally uncontroversial. The main complaint related to the article 'War', where Wolseley had written again on the benefits of 'battle training' and not mindless irrelevant drill. Another row erupted over a series of articles on the British Army that Wolseley wrote in 1890 for an American journal, Harper's Magazine. Again Wolseley covered the same ground as in earlier articles, appealing for better pay, more practical uniforms, the need for a Secretary of State who knew something about the army, etc. The very fact that these articles were appearing in the United States aroused the Duke of Cambridge's fury because he believed that the Americans might take them as a statement of future reforms which would shortly take place within the British Army. He complained to Ponsonby about one article that it 'contains doctrines and views I deeply regret and highly reprobate'. The Duke asked Ponsonby to get the Queen to write a letter of reprimand to Wolseley to be sent either through Stanhope or the Duke. Ponsonby's reply was that the Queen would write

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52 The Times, 5 Dec. 1882
53 Wolseley to the Queen, 27 Dec. 1882, Buckle, Vol. 3, 2nd Series, p387

the letter if the Duke told her what to say. The Duke wanted the Queen to tell Wolseley 'not to publish anything or even to speak as seldom as possible on Army matters'.[54] The Queen wrote to Wolseley and thereafter he wrote only for the less public United Services Magazine.

If the Duke and the various Secretaries of State objected so much to the content of Wolseley's articles then it appears surprising that the Duke and Stanhope should have sanctioned Wolseley's contribution on the British Army to the book, The Reign of Queen Victoria, edited by T.H. Ward. This was a book specifically produced to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee in 1887, and it would be expected that every contribution to it should have received official sanction.

In his article Wolseley covered the same ground he had been over before: the lack of artillery in Britain; better training for the men and more military education for officers; and increased pay. The Volunteers were praised for their patriotism and an appeal made for compulsory physical education in schools. He criticised the government for its lack of policy and claimed that 'the party politician, with his dreams of universal peace, of general disarmament, and international courts of arbitration' was responsible for the ills of the army. By comparing the performance of the British Army in the various wars of the reign Wolseley showed how the Cardwell reforms had led to great improvements. On future policy he repeated his appeal for the selection of officers for higher commands, called for localisation to be extended to the cavalry, and wrote that the artillery should be divided into battalions and the field artillery entirely separated from the garrison. In other words, Wolseley used this opportunity to publish his programme for further army reform.[55]

The fact that the Duke did not stop the publication of this article calls into question the extent to which the Duke really objected to or differed from Wolseley's opinions. It seems more likely that the main objection lay in the fact that Wolseley wrote articles without official permission, which called into question the degree to which Wolseley felt subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief. There were occasions when the Duke publicly supported Wolseley, particularly in appeals for more men and money. In private, as has been seen during the row over

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54 Cambridge to Ponsonby, 7 Feb. 1890; Ponsonby to Cambridge, 13 Feb. 1890; Cambridge to Ponsonby, 17 Feb. 1890, Buckle, Vol. 1, 3rd series, pp563-71

55 Wolseley, 'War'

the speech at Sir John Pender's dinner, he actually welcomed Wolseley's comments. He would never accept Wolseley's opinions on drill or selection, but over the period appears to have become reconciled to other reforms such as the continuation of short service. In fact, the Duke so appreciated Wolseley's services as Adjutant General that he willingly accepted Stanhope's suggestion in November 1887 that Wolseley's tenure of office should be extended for another year; Wolseley actually remained Adjutant General till 1890.[56] Therefore one must conclude that had Wolseley submitted his articles for scrutiny before publication much of the controversy which surrounded them would never occurred.

There were some subjects on which Wolseley spoke to which the Duke certainly had no objection. One of the most important was the Volunteer movement. This formed one link between the minority of the population in the still unpopular Regular Army and the majority of the population and was for this reason emphasised by Wolseley. In his numerous speeches to various Volunteer regiments in the 1880s and 1890s Wolseley paid frequent tribute to the Volunteer movement describing it as 'a spontaneous movement of the people to supply a want that our Government had not the courage to provide against'. Wolseley outlined the aims of the Volunteer movement. For example in December 1887 he acknowledged that the two great Volunteer reviews of that year had impressed him and others that the Volunteers had learnt their basic drill very well, and now urged them to learn the higher duties of soldiering such as the use of outposts and bivouacs. In the same speech he promised that on the publication of the new mobilisation plan the following year the Volunteers would gain a clear view of what their exact duties would be at time of war. But Wolseley also stressed that the Volunteers could not be compared to the Regulars in one very fundamental point of military conduct; their shooting record was appalling. The public often gained the wrong impression that the Volunteers shot very well because they looked only at the results of a few first-class shots at the annual shooting meeting at Wimbledon whereas 'military efficiency lay in having a large proportion of average shots in a regiment'. Nowhere he told another audience later, had this point been demonstrated better than at Omdurman where the sheer firepower from British rifles had ensured that no Dervish had got closer than 5-600 yards to the

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56 Stanhope to Cambridge, 9 Nov. 1887, in Verner, p351

British line. Wolseley did accept that the root of the problem lay in the shortage, particularly for the London regiments, of shooting ranges. He welcomed with enthusiasm the opening of a range paid for and built by the City of Nottingham Corporation and given free of charge to the Nottingham Robin Hood Volunteer Regiment, and he hoped that this patriotic example would be followed by other city corporations.[57]

Wolseley praised other aspects of the Volunteer movement. By setting up cyclist corps, a corps of signalling and a medical corps they could, in the event of invasion, release a considerable number of regular troops. However, Wolseley met with some criticism for what appeared to be his over-enthusiastic promotion of the usefulness of the Volunteers. In his first address as Commander-in-Chief to the Royal United Services Institute when chairing a discussion on the Volunteers by Colonel E.J.A. Balfour, Wolseley said 'we have to take them as they are...If a man has a gap in his fence and cannot afford to have an iron gate, he must be prepared to put up with a wooden one. That is the way in which we must look at the Volunteer force.'[58] In an article in Nineteenth Century Lonsdale Hale took Wolseley to task for this, urging Wolseley to make it clearer in his public speeches the difference between 'Very good' and 'Very good for Volunteers', because he felt that both the public and the Volunteers themselves though Wolseley meant the former whereas the latter was the true picture.[59] In other words Wolseley must make clearer the difference between the semi-trained mass of Volunteers and the highly-trained small body of Regulars so that the public did not get a false feeling of security.

Since it seemed that not enough money could be found to pay the Regulars a decent wage and encourage the recruitment of educated men, the Volunteer movement was seen by Wolseley to have a role to play in encouraging educated men to undertake some form of military training. To this end he chided his undergraduate audience in Oxford asking them 'was it creditable to that great and ancient University, once the Head Quarters of the Royal Army of England, that men enough to maintain even one small battalion of Volunteers could not be found there?' According to

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57 'Our Military Requirements'; The Times, 7 Dec. 1887; The Times, 28 Jan. 1889; The Times, 21 Nov. 1898; The Times, 9 Dec. 1895

58 J.R.U.S.I., 40, (1896), p56

59 Lonsdale Hale, 'An Army Without Leaders', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXXIX, No. 229, (March 1896), p357-74

the report of the speech in The Times most of Wolseley's speech had been punctuated by cheers but there appears to have been a notable period of silence at this point. After the speech the Master of Balliol, Benjamin Jowett, wrote to Wolseley apologising for the uproar his speech had caused, and this may have been why.[60] Wolseley repeated this appeal for educated men to have military training when addressing the Inns of Court Regiment whose numbers had fallen off drastically in the recent years. At that time there were only four companies whereas in the early days of the Volunteer movement there had been six.[61]

Jowett had invited Wolseley to speak in Oxford specifically on the subject of military service on the grounds that the 'army is unpopular because it represents a set of influences opposed to popular government. It would be otherwise if the army and navy would be regarded as the two great public schools of England.' Wolseley took up this challenge demonstrating that because of the large number of annual recruits to the Regulars and the Auxiliaries

> that was their great military school, which contained about 617,000 pupils...As regarded numbers, it must, therefore, be allowed that theirs was indeed the greatest of the national schools, and when they came to consider what it was they taught their pupils, he believed its importance as an educational factor would be still more fully acknowledged.[62]

Throughout his career Wolseley had believed that compulsory physical training in schools was essential for the good of the nation. In an article written in 1871 Wolseley suggested that 'now that the education of the people is to be provided for nationally, a drill-sergeant ought to be maintained in every parish'. The government never took up this suggestion but other bodies did. When present at Southwark in June 1889 for the inaugural formation of a cadet corps Wolseley expanded on what he had told his audience in Oxford: 'he pointed out the moral as well as the physical advantages which would result from the training of lads from the alleys and gutters in that district'. The boys would learn 'habits of order, tidiness, regularity, and attention to minor details, besides improving the duty of implicit obedience and respect for superiors'. In a later speech when Commander-in-Chief he praised the establishment of Boys Brigades as a further means of giving

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60 The Times, 13 May 1889; Jowett to Wolseley, 17 May 1889, WPP
61 The Times, 9 Dec. 1895
62 Jowett to Wolseley, 17 Feb. 1889, WPP; The Times, 13 May 1889

some form of physical training to the population.[63]

With his concern for the physical well-being of the nation and the need to provide an adequate number of recruits for the army it may be thought that Wolseley would be in favour of conscription. However, he told a debating society at University College, London that conscription was unnecessary in Britain for two reasons; firstly, because at that time an adequate number of recruits was forthcoming; and secondly, a large army was not necessary 'as long as this country was surrounded by the silver streak of sea, neither bridged over nor tunnelled under by a band of speculators'.[64] Nevertheless after his retirement Wolseley did voice the view that unless Britain paid her army 'the current rate of wages obtained by able-bodied men in the labour market' as the only other voluntary army in the world did, i.e. the United State Army, then conscription might become necessary. This statement was contained in a letter from Wolseley to the National Service League for the first issue of its journal.[65] At no time did Wolseley suggest that conscription was a viable military prospect in the foreseeable future, he did, however, frequently voice the somewhat Social Darwinian view that the nation with the best physical training, which conscription gave the European powers, 'must, after a certain number of generations, become a better race, - better both morally and physically - than the nation which allows its young men to adopt any mode of life they wish to - no matter how unhealthy it may be'.[66]

In a retrospective article on Wolseley's career by "Nemo" in the Contemporary Review the author, while criticising Wolseley's habit of making 'impulsive speeches', concluded that he had had little choice, 'after a lifetime spent in appeals to the statesmen to take the nation into their confidence, [Wolseley] had seized the bull by the horns, and had himself appealed to the nation...'.[67] The question remains of whether Wolseley's appeals to the public had had any effect. Some civilian army reformers believed they had done; for example, Amery praised Wolseley for helping 'to awaken the national consciousness out of the self-satisfied full-bellied drowsiness in

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63 'Our Military Requirements'; The Times, 1 June 1889; The Times, 4 Dec. 1896
64 The Times, 24 June 1882
65 Quoted in The Times, 1 April 1913
66 'The Army'
67 "Nemo", 'Lord Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief', Contemporary Review, Vol. LXXIX (Feb. 1901), p161-70. The author was probably Edward Hamilton, who had signed an article he wrote for the Contemporary Review in 1893 with "Nemo". Bahlman, p187

which it had so long rested'.[68] Both Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson paid tribute to Wolseley's efforts. Dilke in The British Army quoted extensively from Wolseley's speeches while not always agreeing with his opinions. Spenser Wilkinson, either alone or in collaboration with Dilke, wrote many books on the question of imperial defence admitting that their interest had been aroused by Wolseley's public speeches. The fact that these books reached a wide audience shows something about the success of Wolseley's appeals to the public.

The practical effect of the awakening of the nation's consciousness is less easy to gauge. The speech at Sir John Pender's dinner and the subsequent parliamentary debates had contributed to an invasion scare in 1887-8. The government was forced for once to listen to the military and naval experts and to the public. The Navy, however, was the main beneficiary of the scare. Charles Beresford, as Fourth Naval Lord, acted like Wolseley in appealing directly to the public, and ignoring the First Naval Lord and the First Lord of the Admiralty. Beresford also corresponded with Wolseley on Britain's vulnerability to invasion. Both believed in this but, whereas Beresford wanted a vast increase made to the Navy which he felt would secure Britain's shores, Wolseley felt that a force of 150,000 could always get through and that therefore Britain needed a larger, more efficient army. At the same time Wolseley believed that 'if it were impossible for both the services to be perfect, he would infinitely prefer to see perfection on the sea than to see it on land'.[69] Without a large navy a larger enemy force could land and then Britain would have no option but to surrender. The invasion scare led to the formation of the Volunteer Home Defence Association. The Navy in contrast got a huge building programme sanctioned by the 1889 Naval Defence Act. The Navy retained its public advantage: the Navy League was established in December 1894 and quickly set up branches throughout Britain, whereas the army had no such equivalent until the shock of the Boer War and the threat of German power led to the formation of the National Service League in 1902.

Therefore it appears that Wolseley did not stimulate public opinion to the extent to which he had hoped, and various explanations can be given for this. Firstly, the British public while

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68 Amery, Times History, Vol. II, p24
69 The Times, 28 Feb. 1883

interested in the reasons for military disasters such as Isandhlwana and the failure to relieve Gordon, were too ready to feel great satisfaction at success in India or in Egypt. Secondly. the government responded to the public appeals of the military experts by calling on them to justify existing expenditure and then doing its best to deny them a platform to do so. Lord Randolph Churchill was particularly vocal on this subject in a long speech at Wolverhampton in June 1887.[70] Lastly, the arguments were not presented coherently, for example Arnold-Forster complained that Wolseley 'has expressed so many opinions on so many occasions, and in support of such apparently conflicting conclusions, that it could not be difficult to find a dictum of his on any side of any question'.[71] He was exaggerating because, as this chapter has shown, Wolseley held most of the same opinions while Commander-in-Chief as he had done at the start of his career as an army reformer. Nevertheless, Arnold-Forster did have a point; in 1887 Dilke wrote to Wolseley asking 'if there is any speech or anything published of yours in which you have [given] "counsels of perfection", i.e. things that might be done if the public was willing to spend the money that really might be spent'.[72] Wolseley had never done so nor did he in the future. Therefore the remainder of this thesis will examine Wolseley's opinions on every aspect of military affairs, seek to establish what the 'counsels of perfection' might have been, and whether they would have been of real benefit to the British Army if put into practice.

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70 The Times, 4 June 1887
71 Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, p145-6
72 Dilke to Wolseley, 17 March 1887, WPP

Chapter 3 - The Manpower Question

The following three chapters will cover Wolseley's period at the War Office before his appointment as Commander-in-Chief in 1895. He served first as Quartermaster General, then as Adjutant General, and finally left the War Office at the end of 1890 to serve as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. During this period Wolseley made a significant contribution to the cause of army reform. The Secretary of State for War in the 1868-1874 Liberal government, Edward Cardwell, introduced a series of reforms of the army which have subsequently borne his name.[1] Briefly, the civil-military relationship between the Secretary of State and the Commander-in-Chief was altered, bringing the latter under the authority of the former; the system of the purchase of commissions in the army was abolished; short service was introduced; an Army Reserve was set up; and work was begun on the reorganisation of the regiments on a territorial basis, together with the linking of battalions. It is not intended to go into any great detail on these reforms, as this has been done elsewhere.[2]

These chapters will cover three areas of major importance: the manpower question, the Army Reserve, and the drive towards making the British Army modern, effective, and efficient on the battlefield. Wolseley played an important role in all these areas. He defended the principle of short service, and the first of these chapters will examine Wolseley's opinions on the subject, and his attempts to solve the recurring manpower crises in the British Army. Wolseley supported the establishment of the Army Reserve, and the second of these chapters will consider why he did so, and for what purpose Wolseley believed the Reserve existed, how it should be built up, maintained, and used. The third of these chapters will analyse Wolseley's opinions on the variety of topics which can be gathered together under the heading of the drive towards a modern army. The chapter will cover Wolseley's views on every aspect of Britain's military organisation, from

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[1] For convenience the various reforms made by Cardwell have been referred to in this and later chapters as the 'Cardwell system'.

[2] For example in Hamer; A.V. Tucker, 'Army and Society in England, 1870-1900: a reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms' in Journal of British Studies, Vol. 2, (May 1963) pp110-41; B. Bond, Lord Cardwell's Reforms: The Effect of Short Service and Localisation upon the British Army 1868-1894, Unpublished MA thesis, University of London, (1962); E. Moses, The Cardwell Reforms, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, (1969)

the training and equipment of the soldiers, to the higher staff organisation, and his approach to the question of whether a Chief of Staff should be introduced into the British Army.

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Wolseley bore no responsibility for the origins of the Cardwell system, since he was absent in Canada until August 1871. He was, however, directly involved in the localisation scheme, serving on the relevant committee, under the presidency of General Sir Patrick MacDougall, which issued its final report in 1872. Wolseley has been identified by contemporary and later commentators as the great defender of the short service system. In a letter to Randolph Churchill complaining that his review of the evidence given to the 1892 Wantage Commission, which had examined the short service system, was not to be published, Roberts summed up his opinion of Wolseley on the subject of short service:

> 'He has all along been the firmest supporter of a short service army, and when certain failures have become indefensible, he makes desperate attempts to shift the responsibility from himself and the system, at one time to the military authorities, at another to the Secretaries of State; and would wish people to believe that, if he had been allowed to have his own way, matters would now be very different.'[3]

This chapter will examine how Wolseley came to have such a reputation and will question whether Wolseley really believed as deeply in the short service system as has been generally assumed.

At first it may be worthwhile to make a few points on what the Cardwell system was, and why it was set up, before turning to the main question of Wolseley's opinions of it. The Army Enlistment Act of 1870 introduced a short service system whereby soldiers enlisted for six years in the colours and six in the newly-established Army Reserve. This period of service was later altered by Childers to seven years in the colours and five in the Army Reserve. From the government's viewpoint three main reasons stood out for the formation of this system: firstly, economy; secondly, to improve recruitment; and, thirdly, to improve the ability of the army to fight anywhere in the world at short notice. Economy was to be achieved by short service through the consequent reduction of the number of soldiers serving for 21 years to pension. Cardwell also managed, in the event, a short-lived economy by recalling a number of battalions from remote colonies of limited strategic value. Recruitment was a major problem throughout the nineteenth

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[3] Roberts to Churchill, 24 May 1892, Roberts Papers, N.A.M. 7101-23-100/3

century and government advisers suggested that long service in inhospitable climates such as India and most of the colonies was unpopular and that the introduction of short service might stimulate recruitment. In the light of the British performances in the early wars of Queen Victoria's reign, particularly in the Crimea, there was little doubt that the British Army was inefficient and struggled to defeat even under-equipped opponents. Furthermore it was unsupported, once the main body of soldiers had been despatched on a campaign the capability for reinforcement or even the replacement of casualties was severely limited. The Army Reserve was set up to remedy this defect.

The government had been influenced in its reforms by the example of the all-conquering Prussian Army, whose unexpected successes in the wars of German Unification over the long service Austrian and French armies had sent a shock wave through the war departments of Europe. The main lesson appeared to be that success was dependent on the possession of a highly efficient small body of fighting men forming the nucleus of an army organised on a territorial basis that would be expanded in times of need by the influx of trained former soldiers serving in the Army Reserve. The twin advantages of the system were economy and efficiency. Cardwell was quick to note the likely benefits of the new system of short service. In 1870 he wrote to the Queen that in 1868 it would have required 27 battalions to send 20,000 men abroad leaving only 19 battalions at home, whereas, on the distribution of 1870, 24 battalions with 5,000 reservists would furnish the same number of men, leaving 43 battalions at home.[4] Therefore the establishment of the Army Reserve was vital to Britain's ability to wage war in the future.

Any discussion of Wolseley's opinions on the Cardwell system should be considered under two headings: why did he support the system on its introduction, and why did he continue to press for its retention against the growing evidence that it was a failure? There can be no doubt that the Cardwell system needed defending: its opponents were outspoken, and the various aspects of it were examined by the plethora of committees which met during this period.[5] But it will be argued

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4 16 May 1870, Hansard, Vol. CCI; Cardwell to the Queen, 19 July 1870, Cardwell Papers, PRO30/48/2

5 For example: Committee on the Organisation of the Land Forces, c.712 (1873) XVIII; Committee on Recruiting, Maj.-Gen. Taylor, 1875, WO33/32; Committee on Boy Enlistment, Taylor, 1876, WO33/29; Committee on Brigade Depots, 1878, WO33/32; Committee on Inducements for Recruitment, Viscount Bury, 1878, WO33/32; Committee on Conditions of Service as affected by Short Service, Lieut.-Gen.

that Wolseley was not as uncritical of the system as previously thought, but faced the dichotomy of having to defend it in public while criticising and attempting to improve it in private.

The reasons why Wolseley supported the Cardwell system on its introduction are perhaps obvious. His early experiences in the field had convinced him that the British Army was badly organised and led, and the ranks filled by old inefficient soldiers. The army could fight abroad for any length of time only with the greatest difficulty since drafts and reinforcements were hard to find. Therefore Wolseley was understandably enthusiastic about the introduction of a system which he, along with its authors, believed would solve all the existing problems. Short service would improve recruitment and enhance the quality of the men enlisting. The establishment of the Army Reserve would ensure that no army abroad would struggle unsupported as had the British Army in the Crimea. Localisation would stimulate recruitment and be the first major step towards an organisation for war.[6] In his article of 1871 on the subject of army reform, Wolseley was uncritical of the Cardwell system, but he did suspect that the government might not provide the funds to ensure its functioning, and he did voice his support for a definition of the purposes for which the army existed.

Apart from a genuine belief in the validity of the Cardwell system, there was another reason for Wolseley's support which also provides the key to why he continued to defend the system even when its defects had become apparent - Wolseley's need to establish an identity for himself at the War Office. The previous two chapters have argued that Wolseley felt the need to establish a reputation to provide himself with an identity separate from the circle of mainly aristocratic officers whose careers were fostered by the Duke or by members of the Royal Court. This he achieved by becoming known as an army reformer, and securing political support for his career advancement. Therefore Wolseley found it difficult to criticise the Cardwell system in

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Armstrong, c.2817 (1878); Committee on the Effect of Short Service on the preparedness for War of the Army, Lord Cadogan, 1879, WO33/33; Committee on the Reorganisation of the Army, Lord Airey, c.2791 (1881) XXI; Committee on the Formation of Territorial Regiments, Ellice, c.2793 (1881) XX; Committee to Consider the Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army, Lord Wantage, c.6582 (1892) XIX.

[6] The 1872 Localisation Act linked two battalions, one serving abroad and one at home. The home battalion was to be allocated to a brigade district with a depot centre for recruitment and training. It would provide its linked battalion abroad with drafts and periodically replace it. In 1881 this system was completed by joining the linked battalions as double battalions, giving them territorial names instead of numbers, and attaching two Militia battalions to each depot.

public, he could only attempt to make it function, and make proposals for the remedy of defects and improvements in the privacy of the War Office.

By 1880 cracks were apparent in the Cardwell system. The requirement to fight two wars simultaneously, in Afghanistan and South Africa, had placed an unforeseen strain on the army, and evidence was accumulating to show that the short service soldiers were not as efficient as their predecessors. The conservative officers had successfully appealed for a re-examination of the Cardwell system and this led to the Airey Committee on the organisation of the army. Wolseley sprang to the defence of the Cardwell system, arguing that it had not received a fair trial and that blame for its failures should be placed with the politicians who had failed to provide the funds to raise the establishments of the home battalions and depots to compensate for the despatch abroad of both battalions of a regiment. Wolseley would continue to put forward these two arguments throughout the period.

The failures of the Cardwell system when faced with the demands of two wars simultaneously should have come as no surprise to Wolseley because the system had an inherent fault: it was inelastic, and could work only so long as parity was maintained between the number of battalions at home and abroad. In 1892 Wolseley wrote to Campbell-Bannerman arguing that this balance was 'the principle upon which Mr Cardwell organised the army'.[7] The Cardwell system had been heavily influenced by the continental example and did not pay sufficient attention to Britain's unique requirements as an imperial power. There is little evidence to provide a definite view of Wolseley's opinions on this subject. He cannot be identified as a great student of the Prussian army system and certainly never wrote on the subject, but nor did he argue that Britain's Empire required the introduction of a unique army organisation. Britain had been involved in numerous small wars during the first half of Queen Victoria's reign and, despite the Liberal abhorrence of foreign commitments, there was every likelihood that small imperial wars would continue to place demands on the British Army. Furthermore, virtually wherever the British Army went to war in this period, it left a small garrison behind to safeguard the security of its new interest.

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7 Wolseley to Campbell-Bannerman, 6 Dec. 1892, Campbell-Bannerman Papers, BM 41233

The question remains: why did Wolseley strenuously defend this faulty system after the Airey Committee and the two wars had provided the evidence to demonstrate its weaknesses? The reason lies in Wolseley's position at the time: in 1880 he had only just broken into the senior ranks at the War Office with his appointment as Quartermaster General, and needed to continue to be known as an army reformer in order to further his career. In addition a new challenger had appeared on the scene. As the victor of the Second Afghan War, Roberts's opinions were listened to and, since he served in India, he came to epitomise Indian opinion on army matters. As Roberts showed that his sympathies lay with the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley was forced to present an even more determined defence of short service than he might have done if his rivals were less illustrious.

In his defence of the Cardwell system Wolseley had to supply the answers to four basic questions: could the short service system supply India with trained soldiers for a sufficient period for them to become seasoned men? were short service soldiers as capable of fighting campaigns as their long service predecessors had been? did the home army have too many young men to allow it to function as a separate entity from the army stationed in India? and could the increased number of recruits be found?

The problems encountered in maintaining an army in India capable of service in a hostile climate provided the main threat to short service and one which Wolseley clearly recognised and accepted. He faced a dilemma: he was prepared to defend short service against all comers if the alternative was to be a return to the old system of long service to pension, but he was also ready to propose schemes for extending the term of short service when necessary, particularly with reference to service in India. Wolseley accepted that six years' service in the colours was too short a period for valuable Indian service. It was generally accepted that the soldier could not be sent abroad until he had spent one year in training. Depending on when he enlisted, and because the trooping season was only once a year, this could remove at least one year and maybe two from the time he could spend in India; once there he would serve three or four years before being returned to Britain to enter into Reserve service. Even before the deficiencies of short service were made public after the Afghan war, primarily in Roberts's Mansion House speech in February 1881,

Wolseley was reconsidering the terms of service which should be adopted. Lord Cadogan's committee had suggested that the authorities in India should be allowed to re-engage 25% of the short service men after their initial period of six years' colour service was completed. Wolseley, then serving on the India Council, supported this proposal. Indeed, he was prepared to see an overall extension of the terms of service to allow for eight years in India and six in the Reserve at home, and furthermore to see men sent to India only after they had completed three years' service at home. It may be that Wolseley was ready to make this suggestion because the Cadogan committee had been in favour of the retention of short service and in fact had been prepared to recommend that 'until the Reserve is produced, the Committee are of opinion that short service must be worked as a rigid system'.[8] Wolseley's proposal, which seems extraordinary in the light of his usual statements on short service, can be better understood when remembering that the Cadogan committee was a departmental one. The more public Airey Committee would provide a greater challenge.

The Airey Committee, which was composed of what Wolseley called 'Wellington's men', in other words those of the old school he despised, recommended enlistment for eight years' colour service. This was perhaps unsurprising given the views of men including Wolseley that six years did not provide India with a sufficient number of well-trained physically mature men. It was the committee's other recommendations which caused more controversy. By proposing the abolition of the linked battalions system and the amalgamation of the brigade depots into larger depots serving more regiments, the Airey committee called for an abolition of the main tenets of the Cardwell system.[9] Childers bravely ignored these recommendations. He did increase service in the colours to seven years, the half way point between the Cardwell six years and the eight years proposed by the Airey committee. Far from abolishing the linked battalion system Childers completed Cardwell's work, followed the recommendations of the 1872 MacDougall Committee on localisation and worked towards the territorial reorganisation of regiments including the controversial task of renaming them.

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8 Memorandum of suggestions of securing the best troops for India at the smallest cost, 8 Dec. 1876, WOP W35; Report of the Cadogan Committee

9 Report of the Airey Committee

Once the Airey Committee had made its recommendations Wolseley was forced back onto the defensive. In direct contradiction to his 1876 proposal, Wolseley announced in 1880 that he was opposed to extending service to 13 or 14 years because 'if you so increase the period of service, you will create an idea that the soldier who has given you the best years of his life should be allowed to serve on until he has earned a pension'. Now firmly established in the War Office he was hostile to India's demands, claiming (correctly) that service of eight years in India would seriously injure the formation of the Reserve unless the Secretary of State was prepared to allow more men at home to join the Reserve after three years in the colours.[10] Five years later Wolseley had changed his mind again, and this time he was in favour of allowing privates to serve for eight years in India. This extension of service would reduce the number of recruits required annually, and would reduce the demand for drafts which had reached a critical point because the balance of the battalions at home and abroad had become disrupted to the tune of 83 abroad supported by 67 at home.[11]

Whereas Roberts was quite prepared to make public his proposal for two armies, one in India recruited on long service, and the other a short service army at home to create a Reserve, Wolseley was not. In a letter to Dilke, Wolseley stated that 'I would keep every British soldier sent to India there for eight years... I would compensate the Army Reserve for the loss this would entail by discharging double the number at home after three years' service'.[12] In practice this proposal did amount to a proposal for the establishment of two armies even though he felt that the concept of a separate army for India was quite unacceptable. Wolseley had served for only a few years in India during the Mutiny but he had drawn conclusions from the conduct of the East India Company Army which he would not alter throughout his career. Dilke reported on Wolseley's opinions by saying that Wolseley believed that the East India Company Army had been 'the worst and most dangerous body of men who were ever had under arms.'[13] Wolseley continued to wage war on the East India Company Army long after it had been amalgamated with the British Army in

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10 Memorandum on army organisation, 16 Oct. 1880, WPP, W/W1/1
11 Memorandum on an increase to the army, 12 Nov. 1885, WPP, W/MEM/1
12 Wolseley to Dilke, 19 Nov. 1887, Dilke Papers, BM 43914
13 Ibid.

India, particularly whenever he felt that there was a danger that politicians might take Roberts's calls for two armies seriously. For example in a letter to his brother George, Wolseley urged him to write an article contrasting the quality of the men serving in India then with what it had been previously. Wolseley believed that the improvement in the quality of men in India stemmed from the fact that before men had served for eight or ten years in India while wanting to come home, whereas now they could come home after only four years if the terms of short service enlistment were adhered to.[14]

Dilke concluded his summary of the opinions of Wolseley and Roberts as follows: 'Both Lord Wolseley and Sir F. Roberts ask for shorter service at home, longer service in India; and, though Lord Wolseley shrinks from the words "a separate army", and Sir F. Roberts from the words "an Indian army", they both recognise the necessity for accepting certain facts'.[15] Both Wolseley and Roberts certainly did accept the 'certain facts' that the existing short service system could not provide for the type of army Britain needed. There the agreement ended, and it is perhaps because no agreement seemed possible either among military circles or political ones as to the priorities of the British Army that successive British governments were forced to resort to various short term expedients to prop up a faulty system. It will be argued in a later chapter, that until a government found the courage to present an overview of British imperial interests, neither the appropriate size of the British Army nor its organisation could be settled.

Wolseley denied in public that the short service soldier was weaker than his long service predecessor. It was claimed that he said 'I do not like the old soldier; I do not believe in him. Whenever I have had work to do, I have always taken young soldiers'.[16] This was manifestly untrue. In 1875, on inspecting the men garrisoning Natal he commented that they needed another year's good feeding before they would be mature enough to go on active service. In 1879 when told of his appointment to succeed Chelmsford in South Africa during the Zulu War, Wolseley requested that a detachment of Marines or Guards should be sent out in the knowledge that the young troops in South Africa had not performed as well as expected. During the Gordon Relief

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14 Wolseley to George Wolseley, 21 Feb. 1895, Duke University
15 C. Dilke, The British Army, (London 1888), p239
16 Quoted in Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, p148

campaign Wolseley wrote to the Duke of Cambridge explaining his proposal to form a Camel Corps: 'The young soldiers under twenty three years of age will not be able to withstand the hard work which will fall upon all ranks after Wady Halfa is left behind'.[17]

Yet despite contriving to use the older soldiers on his campaigns Wolseley continued to defend the principle of the young short service soldier. The events of the two wars in South Africa, the Zulu War and the First Boer War cast doubt on the efficiency of these men. Wolseley attempted to conceal the weaknesses of the short service soldiers and to emphasise any good points. For example when the veteran news correspondent W.H. Russell wrote unfavourably on the quality of the short service troops in South Africa during the Zulu War in the Army and Navy Gazette; Wolseley arranged for him to go home.[18] Commenting on the same campaign to his friend Maurice, Wolseley claimed that in a letter from Chelmsford to Childers, the former had said that 'he would be glad to have such seasoned soldiers [as those coming from India] although no troops could have fought better than the young soldiers comprising the battalions he had already with him'.[19] The Duke of Cambridge spoke out for the long service soldiers when he told Wolseley that the best regiments in South Africa were the 13th and 57th which were composed of long service troops. Furthermore, the Duke cast doubt on the stamina of the two short service battalions fighting in South Africa, the 58th and 60th, which suffered heavily at Laing's Nek and at the Ingogo. In response to this criticism Wolseley was relieved to be able to state, in his autobiography, that the troops who had fled Majuba Hill during the First Boer War had been seasoned long service troops fresh from service in India.[20]

It must be remembered when considering the early performances of the short service troops that the Cardwell system had already been breached. Cardwell had anticipated that when troops were to be sent on active service they would be strengthened by reservists rejoining the ranks. In 1878 the threat of a major war with Russia to protect British interests in Constantinople

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17 Journal, 19 Aug. 1875, WO147/5; journal, 28 May 1879, WO147/7; Wolseley to Cambridge, 13 Sept. 1884, in Verner, p266

18 Journal, WO147/7

19 Wolseley to Maurice, 1881, Maurice Papers, 2/2/29. Contrast with letters quoted in J.P.C. Laband (ed.), Lord Chelmsford's Zululand Campaign 1878-1879, (Stroud 1994)

20 Cambridge to Wolseley, 26 Aug. 1879, in Verner, p166; WPP SSL8

and the Mediterranean had resulted in the calling up of the Army Reserve. This meant, for reasons to be discussed in the next chapter, that it was, if not actually impossible, then certainly highly undesirable to recall the reserves when the Zulu and Afghan wars broke out in the following year. Therefore the British Army had to fight two largish wars without its planned influx of trained men, and its performance suffered accordingly.

A major point of controversy surrounding the performance of the short service troops concerned their youth. Wolseley had recognised this problem as a commander in the field and had taken steps on most his campaigns to ensure that the brunt of the fighting was undertaken by picked men. This was a temporary expedient that could be used in campaigns of a limited duration but could not be applied for major wars. Wolseley was therefore concerned to find some method by which the home army could be filled with a sufficient number of efficient men so as to enable it to send drafts to India and to be an effective fighting body in case of need. This was a problem which, had Cardwell's system been maintained as Cardwell had envisaged, would never have arisen. During his speech to the House of Commons on the Army Enlistment Bill, Cardwell had said, 'I hope the day will never come when this country will lose confidence in the old soldier. We have no intention of driving him from the British Army. We regard him as the centre and the pivot of the service; but we wish to have the young soldier combined with him'.[21] But in 1878 it was decided that all future enlistments for the infantry of the line would be exclusively for short service. The result was that the average age of soldiers on the establishment fell.

In an article written in 1878 Wolseley claimed that in 1863 the average age of recruits had been 20 years and 3 months, and that in 1877 it had been 20 years and 7 months.[22] This suggested that the recruits attracted to the army under the short service system should be no less adequate fighting soldiers than their forbearers. The article ignored the fact that under short service the recruits and freshly-trained soldiers formed a far higher proportion of the establishment of the army as a whole than under long service when the inexperience of the young troops could be hidden behind the ranks of the seasoned soldiers. Wolseley was, however, ready to accept that the

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21 16 May 1870, Hansard, Vol. CCI
22 Wolseley, 'Long and Short Service'

figures he had quoted were probably not the exact truth since it was impossible for recruiting officers to confirm the age a recruit had given on enlistment because 'our population is so migratory that recruits are seldom enlisted in the parishes they were born in'.[23] In the 1890s more accurate figures were kept of the age of the soldiers on the establishment and these clearly demonstrate the youth of the home army:

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Cavalry	20.9	22.2	24.4	24.7	21.7	20.0
Household Cavalry	0.93	0.92	1.0	0.75	0.73	0.76
R.H.A.	27.0	38.6	37.3	26.5	29.2	29.0
Field Artillery	33.5	37.0	35.2	39.7	34.6	30.8
Engineers	14.9	17.6	17.0	16.5	15.1	14.0
Foot Guards	14.1	18.3	19.6	19.5	16.3	14.7
Infantry	33.0	37.0	43.7	44.9	41.8	38.8
All arms	27.7	31.6	35.2	35.9	33.3	31.2

Table 3.1. Table showing the percentage of the home army on the establishment under the age of 20. WO 114/1-5

Though publicly ready to defend the fighting qualities of the young short service soldier Wolseley, in private, was prepared to admit that the youth of the home army constituted a serious problem. The evidence of the extent of this problem is not hard to find. Wolseley was forced to agree with Sir Arthur Ponsonby when Ponsonby wrote to him in 1880 expressing his alarm that more troops could not be sent to Ireland to quash the Land War because too great a proportion of the soldiers on the home establishment were either too young for active service or not yet fully trained.[24] In 1884 the Duke of Cambridge wrote to Hartington drawing attention to a memorandum written by Wolseley on 20 October 1883 which had pointed out that 26.5% of the cavalry and 42.8% of the infantry were under one year's service. These men could not be used in time of war nor could they be sent to India as drafts. Some battalions could barely function at all, like the Northamptonshire and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.[25] Proposals to remedy this situation at least in the short term will be discussed below.

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23 Wolseley, 'England as a Military Power'
24 Ponsonby to Wolseley, 30 Oct. 1880, WPP
25 Memorandum on establishment, 20 Oct. 1883, WO33; Cambridge to Hartington, 11 Dec. 1884, in Verner, p319

Before turning to an analysis of the attempts to remedy the situation it is necessary to consider what Wolseley thought was the ideal age of the soldier and how this contrasted with the opinions of other military men. He accepted the general principle that no soldier should be sent abroad until either he was over 20 years of age, or had served for at least one year. This created a difficulty because the most common age for enlistment was 18 or 19. At this age a prospective recruit had usually finished his apprenticeship and was considering his career options. Determining on a minimum enlistment age of 20, as was done in Germany, would merely exacerbate the problems of recruitment because by that age most men would have settled in a trade and be unlikely to want to leave it. Wolseley accepted this, and indeed welcomed it, although he did suggest that for the sake of maintaining an effective army in India efforts should be made to recruit men of 22 or 23 years of age. How Wolseley proposed to attract these older men to the army was never developed fully. It appears unlikely that older men would enlist, except in periods of severe economic depression, since no advantage would come to them on account of their age. Those who did enlist would probably be those men who Wolseley did not want in the army in any case; those who would qualify as 'specials', the category for those men below the very basic physical requirements for enlistment, or undesirables who would fill the military prisons and lower the tone of the army, which would give exactly the opposite impression of service in the army to the one Wolseley wanted to portray.

Wolseley was hostile to the idea, propounded chiefly by Roberts and the 'Indian school', that privates could serve for twelve years and be efficient. He maintained dogmatically that 'as a rule, the private soldier after the first few years of his second engagement is of little use for active work in the field'.[26] The Indian school produced statistics to prove that this was not the case but Wolseley dismissed them, preferring to rely on the impressions he had formed during the Indian Mutiny, and in the early wars of his career on the usefulness of the older soldier. Wolseley's determination to uphold the principles of short service at any cost made a solution to the debate on the ideal age and period of service harder to achieve. In August 1879 the Duke of Cambridge had written to Wolseley expressing his hope that the Airey Committee, then sitting, might be able to

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26 Wolseley, 'The Army'; Memorandum on securing the best troops for India... 8 Dec. 1876 WOP W35

find a 'happy medium' between the youthful short service soldier and the older long service man. The Duke believed that the most valuable years of a soldier's service were between the fourth and twelfth year.[27] Wood considered that in an ideal army 75% of the soldiers should be of between 20 and 22 years of age. Buller, on the other hand, sided with the Duke rather than with his patron Wolseley, and argued that 28 was the ideal age for a private.[28] Wood's preference was perhaps the most feasible and had Cardwell's proposals on the matter not been ignored would have been the case. It is therefore a sign of Wolseley's dogmatism and belief in the correctness of his opinions against evidence to the contrary or the arguments of others that he did not adopt this idea. Had he done so Wolseley would have found it easier to defend the principle of short service since the 25% of the army recruited under long service would have provided a core of seasoned men around which the short service majority could have been trained.

Wolseley recognised the fact that the short service soldier would be more efficient if commanded by an experienced non-commissioned officer. The problem was that the introduction of short service increased the turnover of NCOs. Despite the fact that provisions existed in the Enlistment Acts for NCOs to re-engage for a second term relatively few were willing to do so since there appeared to be no advantage to be gained from such an action. Wolseley therefore pressed for an increase of pay for NCOs and for the granting of certain privileges which he hoped would encourage more good men to accept promotion and to continue their service for a further term. One aspect of Wolseley's opposition to allowing a private to serve for 12 years in the colours was the fear that pressure would then build up to allow the man to extend to 21 years and pension which would counter Cardwell's argument for economy in this area. Wolseley, however, saw NCOs in a different light: their experience should be utilised and he was prepared to advocate steps to encourage them to serve on till pension. On this point Wolseley was in agreement with Roberts who stated that at the age of 31, after 12 years' service, the NCO was just entering his prime.[29] Governments accepted these arguments and during the period made various improvements to the status of the NCO. These arguably failed. General John Adye pointed out in

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27 Cambridge to Wolseley, 26 Aug. 1879, RA E/1/7184
28 Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, p 147
29 The Times, 14 Feb. 1881

an article in 1892 that in 1871 19% of NCOs were under 20 years of age, 49% between 20 and 30, and 32% over 30; in 1891 the corresponding figures were 15.8%, 74.8% and 9.4%.[30] The last figures show that Wolseley had failed to encourage NCOs to serve on till pension and the continuing youth of the NCOs did nothing to help the defence of the short service system.

The efficiency of the short service army in the field and at home was one test of the Cardwell system, the level of recruitment was another. Wolseley was sure, like so many others, that recruitment would benefit from the introduction of short service, but the evidence for this is open to dispute. The short service system demanded a greater number of recruits than had long service. Cardwell had estimated the number to be 30,000 a year and the Airey Committee's report raised this figure upwards to 36,000. In addition to this, should the depots be expanded or new battalions raised by other means, an even greater number of recruits would be called for.

Various factors governed recruitment, some of which Wolseley could attempt to control, and some of which were beyond his reach. He could exert no control over the direction society was taking during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The 1870 Education Act provided free elementary education which led to an increase in literacy and greater independent thought among the lower classes. This independence was encouraged by the 1884 Representation of the People Act which enfranchised a number of agricultural labourers; after the Act two-thirds of the adult male population was entitled to vote. The army competed with the railways and police force for recruits. In particular, the police force offered the same terms as the army, free lodging, uniform, a fixed term of service, but paid far better than the army. In 1891 the Metropolitan Police even went on strike for more pay, a concept impossible for soldiers governed by the Mutiny Act.

Archibald Forbes provided perhaps the best description of the problems faced by the army:

> This is an era of agitation, upheaval, restlessness, strikes, caprice... When the whole community of labour is a-quivering with St Vitus's dance, how can you expect free and eligible recruiting into a professional army whose critical requirement is an engagement for a period of some duration, or certain steadiness in the ranks of that army.[31]

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30 J. Adye, 'In Defence of Short Service', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXXII, No. 187, (Sept. 1892), pp 357-69

31 A. Forbes, 'The Recruiting Problem', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXIX, No. 169, (March 1891), pp 398-404

Wolseley was no advocate of democracy, and saw that the growth of organised labour and the greater opportunities offered to the working man outside the army would make it difficult to maintain a steady flow of recruits. Therefore steps had to be taken to make army service more popular and socially acceptable.

One direction in which Wolseley directed his energy was towards raising the army's profile in society in the hope that this would make army service more popular and socially acceptable. The army abroad had a high profile: Kipling's short stories popularised the army stationed in India, and newspaper correspondents accompanying expeditions wrote enthusiastic passages eulogising the performance of the British soldiers and their commanders. The home army had a lower profile, and localisation, bringing the army to the people, was one way in which Wolseley hoped to raise its status. Under localisation each regiment was given a local identity centred on its depot and it was hoped that this would make the regiment appeal to the local manhood of the district and encourage them to enlist. In 1890 Wolseley claimed that localisation had benefited recruitment, claiming that county regiments had little problem in this area, 'it is nondescript regts such as the "Scottish Fusiliers", the "Gordon Highlanders", the "Royal Irish Fusiliers" which have the most difficulty in obtaining recruits'.[32] Wolseley was probably correct in this assessment; in 1874 local districts supplied 83.8% of recruits, and the remainder came from special recruiting districts set up in large towns. However, localisation was not adapted during this period to cope with the effects of rural depopulation and by 1898 the proportion of recruits enlisting in their local district had fallen to 63.3%. This is also illustrated by the case of the 79th Scottish Regiment, one of the 'nondescript regiments,' 60% of whose recruits in 1892 came from Whitechapel.[33] This should have come as no surprise to Wolseley since, as von Sosnosky, an Austrian captain, pointed out at the time, and Professor Bond more recently, localisation had 'neither a territorial nor tactical character'. It ignored the fact 'that the great majority of recruits

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32 Memorandum on recruitment, 9 Dec. 1890, WO30/132

33 Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p 21

came from the industrial north, whereas most of the great barracks... were in the south of England'.[34] The effect localisation had on tactical training will be examined in a later chapter.

During the 1870 debates on the Army Enlistment Act, Lord Strathnairn argued against short service on the grounds that 'no pension and uncertain civil employment are the future of the short service soldier and render him unmilitary'.[35] Wolseley was well aware of the dangers posed to recruitment by threat of later unemployment and his awareness was shared by others. In Germany and France strenuous efforts had been made to ensure that a reserved number of civil posts in government departments were open only to former soldiers. In 1876 a Select Committee of the House of Commons met to discuss proposals to establish the same system in Britain. In 1881 Childers reported to Gladstone that the establishment of such a system was possible but had met with Treasury objections, and that an Order in Council was necessary to enforce the system.[36] In January 1887 Wolseley wrote to Brodrick, the Financial Secretary, asking that all public offices which could be filled by NCOs and privates should be tabulated and classified, and that a committee should sit to fill each vacancy as it occurred. He flattered Brodrick by claiming that 'your name will be blessed to the third and fourth generation in the Army if you can accomplish for us what so many have attempted but given up in despair...'.[37] Brodrick was successful: he reported to Salisbury a few months later that the Metropolitan Police had promised to take 500 reservists and 2,300 time-expired soldiers, the Post Office would employ 300 telegraphists, and the prison service agreed that 66% of prison warders would in future be former soldiers.[38] Although no system of a committee enforcing the provisions of an Order in Council had been established, as Wolseley had wanted, this was a step in the right direction.

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[34] T. von Sosnosky, England's Danger: the Future of Army Reform, (London 1901) p 84; B. Bond, 'The Effects of the Cardwell Reforms on Army Organisation 1874-1904', J.R.U.S.I., Vol. CV. No. 620, (Nov. 1960) pp515-24; B. Bond, Recruiting the Victorian Army, 1870-1892' in Victorian Studies, Vol. V, (1962) pp331-8

[35] Quoted in Marquis of Anglesey, A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919, Vol. 3, (London 1982), p 32

[36] Childers to Gladstone, 8 Nov. 1881, quoted in S. Childers, Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers, (London 1901) Vol. 1, p 281

[37] Wolseley to Brodrick, 8 Jan. 1887, Brodrick papers PRO30/67/1; The Treasury was reluctant to give financial aid directly to soldiers on leaving the ranks; between 1886 and 1891 a private association spent £400,000 in assisting ex-soldiers in finding employment. During the same period the Government donated £1000.

[38] Brodrick to Salisbury, 6 April 1887, Salisbury Papers

Another method adopted to save the soldier from future penury was the introduction of deferred pay. This meant the withholding of 2d a day of the soldier's pay which after seven years' service would be given to him as a lump sum of £21 in order to enable him to set himself up in civil life. It had been proposed by Major-General Taylor's Committee in 1875 and was introduced in 1876. Initially Wolseley had supported the introduction of deferred pay because of the financial benefit to the soldier on leaving the army, but later he was less enthusiastic. This was because he and others began to see deferred pay as a hindrance to re-engagement, particularly if the soldier had left the colours for a short period and then wanted to re-engage. The exact figures for fraudulent enlistment, often by former soldiers who had accepted and spent their deferred pay and later enlisted in another regiment, are not available but Wolseley, when Adjutant General, was concerned about this growing crime. Nevertheless, a later chapter will show that when the proposal was made to abolish deferred pay when Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief, he spoke out in its defence.

The extent to which the threat of future unemployment and paupery affected recruitment is unquantifiable. What is provable is that it was an exaggerated danger. For example, in 1887 a Return on the number of reservists and pensioners in workhouses in Scotland noted that only six reservists and 113 pensioners had spent an average of more than six months per year in the workhouses, and that 32 workhouses had never cared for any. The Wantage Committee also found that 75% of reservists questioned were in regular employment.[39] But exaggerated or not the perception of future penury may have had an effect on recruitment and was a problem capable of solution which was why Wolseley proposed steps in this direction.

Conditions within the army also had an impact upon recruitment. Skelley has provided ample statistics to prove that conditions in the army were poor, for example, the death rate from infectious diseases ran at double the rate in the army compared with civil life.[40] It has to be said that Wolseley appears to have been relatively unconcerned about the actual conditions soldiers faced in the barracks, and the amount of stoppages deducted from their pay. He did appeal for less

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39 Return of the number of Reservists and Pensioners in Workhouses in Scotland, 26 Oct. 1887, WO32/6505; Appendix XXX of the Report of the Wantage Committee, (1892)

40 Skelley, pp23-7

drunkenness in the army but was not as great an advocate of temperance as Roberts in India. Part of the reason for this may lie in the fact that Wolseley spent most of his career either campaigning, or in the War Office, and therefore did not have the close contact with soldiers at home that those in command of regiments or districts had. He did, however, praise Wood's efforts, made while in command of the Eastern District after 1885, to improve soldiers' conditions, claiming that 'I have always believed in trusting the British soldier'.[41] There is little evidence to suggest in what areas this trust was supposed to lie.

Wolseley was caught in the dilemma of wanting to grant more independence of action to an individual soldier on the battlefield, while at the same time treating him like a component of a machine when it came to his terms of service. He suggested that 'nothing tends more to popularise a regiment than the feeling that if a man wants to do so, he can go into the Army Reserve to complete his term of enlistment. The more elastic we make our contact with the soldier, the more willing are men to enlist'.[42] On one level this was true: the option of three years' service with the colours and nine in reserve or vice versa could benefit recruitment; but on the other hand the ability of the Secretary of State to determine when a man should enter the Reserve, not necessarily with the soldier's agreement, could have exactly the opposite effect. Wolseley did not believe that the soldier cared much about his terms of enlistment on recruitment. Roberts believed the opposite: during his speech at Mansion House he argued that the military authorities should not get men to enlist of their own free will and then 'deal with them as though they were mere machines'. During this speech and in his subsequent articles in The Nineteenth Century Roberts drew attention to various anomalies in the system which reacted against recruitment: for example, in 1880 soldiers in India willing to re-engage had discovered that there was no guarantee that they would continue to serve in their battalion, but were liable to be transferred, without consultation, to a 'foreign' battalion.[43] This anomaly was rectified, but as will be seen in the next chapter, the

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41 E. Wood, From Midshipman to Field Marshal, (London 1906) Vol. 2, p 186
42 Memorandum on Army Expenditure, 20 Aug. 1887, WO33/48
43 The Times, 14 Feb. 1881; Roberts, 'Present State of Army'; 'Free Trade in the Army', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XV, No. 88, (June 1884) pp633-46

same problem re-emerged over the question of whether the men of the Army Reserve would serve with their former battalion or a strange one on their recall to the colours.

Excluding stoppages the average soldier was paid a shilling a day. Wolseley mounted a strong campaign to demonstrate that this paltry figure could not possibly attract any but the poorest recruits. In response to W.H. Smith's alarm at the state of the army he had a curt response:

> I quite realise all you say about the difficulty of obtaining men for the Army, but if more men are required in the interests of the nation, it is - if I may presume to say so - the duty of the Govt to find the men. Everything is to be had if you will pay the market price for it, and men are no exception to this rule. We continue to offer boys' wages...[44]

He argued persistently for a 50% increase in the basic level of pay as the absolute minimum. Wolseley compared the wages offered by another army recruited on voluntary enlistment: the United States Army. In his evidence to the Wantage Committee he pointed out that American soldiers were paid 1s. 9d. a day and received free rations. Wolseley also noted that, far from being an expensive army to maintain, a point of criticism from many quarters and relevant to different areas of military policy, the British Army was cheap. It spent £85 12s. 8½d. per man in contrast to the figure of £238 per man spent in the United States. He argued that it was pointless to do as governments did and compare British military expenditure with French and German since the systems and tasks were completely different.[45]

Economy was a major factor in governing why the basic pay of the soldier was not raised to market values during this period; trade was another. In 1875 Wolseley noted that with pay at that level 'there is no chance of our small peace standing army interfering with trade'.[46] The

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44 Wolseley to W.H. Smith, 27 Dec. 1885, WPP PLB1/57

45 Evidence to the Wantage Committee, Q. 4430-8; memorandum on establishments, 20 Oct. 1883, WO33/41

46 Memorandum on our Army Reserve, 15 Jan. 1875, WOP W37; in 1890 the War Office attempted to establish a correlation between recruitment and unemployment. The conclusions were tenuous because factors such as local variations were not taken into account. Spiers, Army and Society, p44

figures below show the truth of this:

Average wages of an agricultural labourer in Ireland:			1870	1881	1886	1894
			7s. 9d.	8s. 9d.	9s. 3d.	10s.
Weekly wage of a carpenter in 1894:	Dublin	Belfast		Glasgow		London
	34s.	34s. 10½d.		36s.		39s. 7d.

Table 3.2. Taken from A.L. Bowley, Wages and Incomes in the United Kingdom since 1860, (Cambridge, 1937), pp50-52

Ireland was the poorest area of the United Kingdom and, like the next poorest, Scotland, provided a disproportionate number of recruits. Irish recruitment will be discussed below, but here it is only necessary to comment on the fact that if agricultural workers in Ireland could earn more each week than soldiers could, it is unsurprising that there were periodic difficulties in recruitment. The figures on carpenters have been included because Wolseley was eager to recruit from the artisan class, which he believed was more intelligent than the class of from which most recruits came, the poorest and most ill-educated. Whereas Wolseley wanted to improve the quality of the men enlisting, some politicians argued against an increase of pay on the grounds that if pay was increased 'then you would get among the skilled labour class, whose loss to the community would be greatly heavier than that of the loafers & idlers whom we at present get & make men of'.[47]

Ireland provided a disproportionate number of recruits for the British Army; it has been estimated that in 1871 4.38% of all eligible Irishmen joined the British Army in contrast to only 2.09% of all eligible Englishmen.[48] Wolseley came from an Anglo-Irish background and would frequently refer to his 'knowledge of Ireland and Irish ways'. Wolseley was aware that the short service system could provide a unique problem for Ireland: the presence of a large number of men who had received military training in the British Army might at any time in the future, if political tensions reached a breaking point, lead to these men utilising their military skills against the British Army in Ireland. Therefore Wolseley appealed particularly for assistance to be made in finding civil employment for Irish army reservists to prevent them from being seduced by the 'rebel forces'. He lent his weight to an appeal for better treatment of Irishmen in the army after reading a

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47 Campbell-Bannerman to Knox, 2 Jan. 1899, Campbell-Bannerman Papers, BM 41221
48 E.A. Muenger, The British Military Dilemma in Ireland, (Kansas 1991) p68

letter in an Irish newspaper from a ex-soldier who had encountered great difficulties in re-engaging for a second term.[49]

The British Army needed Irish recruits in order to maintain its establishment but during this period the number of Irishmen enlisting was falling. Irish recruitment had begun to fall in the 1850s as Irish emigration to the United States increased but a slump in emigration between 1875 and 1880 led to a peak in enlistment in the army. The apparent opportunity of achieving Home Rule led to another drop in Irish enlistment. In 1893 the Chief Secretary for Ireland, John Morley, wrote to Wolseley, then Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, drawing attention to the fact that 'the number of Irish NCOs and men has gone down from 237/1000 20 years ago to 135/1000 today'.[50] Beyond urging measures to ensure the good treatment of Irish soldiers and reservists Wolseley had no suggestions as to the means to be adopted to reverse this trend. Irish recruitment appeared to be largely dependent on government policy and beyond the control of Wolseley or others at the War Office. Therefore Irish recruitment continued to fall so that by the turn of the century Irishmen formed only 13% of the army; a fall of 8% since 1881.

Wolseley wrote in a memorandum in 1886 that 'nothing can be more injurious to the successful working of any military system than an annually recurring variation in military establishments'.[51] The figures in Appendix IV show precisely the variations in recruitment and establishments during this period. Wolseley argued that if the Cardwell system was to function as its creator had intended, the military authorities at the War Office should be allowed to estimate the demands of future years in terms of recruitment and expenditure and plan accordingly. Wolseley must have envied the system in operation in Germany whereby the army received its budget subject to review only every seven years, through the Septennial Law, rather than every year as in Britain. To some extent the ability of the War Office to make plans was limited because, as Wolseley consistently mentioned, no government or politician until Stanhope in 1888, was prepared to outline the purposes for which the army existed. Wolseley's attempts to bring about such a statement will be discussed in a later chapter. Nevertheless, certain fluctuations in the

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49 Wolseley to Buller, 28 May 1892, WO32/6689
50 Morley to Wolseley, 13 April 1893, WPP
51 Memo on increases to the Army, 24 Jan. 1886, WPP W/MEM/1

demand for recruits could be predicted: for example, the threat of a major war with Russia in 1877-8 had led to an abnormal recruitment level and consequently to an abnormal level of discharges into the Army Reserve six years later. Yet neither Wolseley nor any of his colleagues predicted this seemingly obvious future difficulty at the time. Indeed the Secretary of State in late 1885, W.H. Smith, was astonished to be told that if all the time-expired men who were eligible to be discharged into the Reserve were to go then there would be no cadres for India in the 1886 trooping season. He proposed to take the unprecedented step of embodying the Militia to serve at home, freeing men to go to India. Wolseley's response, with the sanction of the Duke of Cambridge, was a suggestion that 10,000 Chinese could be raised in Hong Kong to serve in India, and that volunteers could be raised in Britain to serve in the ranks of the regular army for a period of six or twelve months.[52] In the event none of these drastic proposals were adopted.

The evidence of the period demonstrates that the home army was consistently placed under severe strain by the requirement to send drafts to India and the colonies, and to Egypt after 1882. Wolseley disagreed with the arguments put forward by men like Roberts who stated that the system had broken down. Wolseley had his own argument to put forward which he did in a letter to Arthur Haliburton in 1891 as the Wantage Committee was about to meet:

> It cannot be repeated too often or be too strenuously drummed into the heads of outsiders, that it is not Mr. Cardwell's system that has broken down, but that all our present difficulties and misfortunes have arisen and are at present directly attributable to the fact that his system has been glaringly and most injudiciously departed from.[53]

Cardwell had designed the system so that if both battalions were abroad the regimental depot would have its establishment raised to provide future drafts for them. No government had carried out this policy and Wolseley identified the failure to do so as the most glaring departure from the Cardwell system. He argued that if this policy had been followed as intended the War Office would not have been forced to adopt the series of temporary and unsatisfactory expedients made during this period.

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52 Smith to Wolseley, 26 Dec. 1885; Wolseley to Smith, 27 Dec. 1885, both WPP
53 Wolseley to Haliburton, 1891, quoted in Life of Wolseley, p 262. Arthur Haliburton was a member of the Wantage Committee.

These temporary expedients fall into seven categories: shortening the terms of service; moving men to the Reserve early; bounties; withdrawing battalions from colonies; extending the area in which the Home Army served; recruiting non-British nationals; and reducing or raising the required height and chest measurements of recruits. None were either entirely successful or desirable. Whenever a shorter term of enlistment with the colours was offered pressure on the establishment was eased but it merely exacerbated the problem in the longer term since three years later this pressure would be worse when the men recruited for three years all joined the Reserve at the same time. For example, Wolseley applauded the success of the scheme which reduced the term of service in the Foot Guards to three years when the Guards had encountered serious difficulties in recruitment. Whilst the scheme was successful in that the men came forward for enlistment Wolseley appears to have ignored the longer term effect: three years was deemed barely sufficient to train a soldier and the more rapid turnover of barely-trained men would necessarily have an adverse effect on the efficiency of the Foot Guards in time of war. Similarly, moving men to the Reserve early merely reduced the average age of soldiers in the Home Army further, and made it less efficient.

It is doubtful whether Wolseley would have been able to make the Cardwell system function even if the finance had been available for the expansion of depots, since the problem of the home establishment was not merely numerical but was also a question of quality. Perhaps the most common method of increasing or decreasing recruitment as required was the use of varying height and chest measurements. The result was, as the Inspector General for Recruiting wrote in 1877, that little attention seemed to be paid to the future efficiency of these recruits.[54] Wolseley was personally attacked on this subject. An article in Blackwood's Magazine all but accused Wolseley of deliberately misleading the public. The anonymous author suggested that Wolseley announced the success of the short service system solely on the grounds that the figures of the number of recruits demonstrated that it was more popular than long service, and concealed from the public the poor quality of many of the recruits and the increasing number of 'special

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54 Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, c.1945, XIX, (1878)

enlistments', which increased during the 1890s from 18% to 36%.[55] Wolseley really had no adequate defence to these criticisms: the number of soldiers being invalided out of the army before their term of colour service was over was increasing, so that as many as 48% of recruits fell into this category.

Wolseley faced a great challenge to his defence of the short service system when called upon to give evidence to the Wantage Committee in 1891. It was generally accepted by most, though not by Wolseley, that the system had received a fair trial and must be re-examined and subjected to improvements where necessary. As a result Stanhope set up the Wantage Committee to undertake a thorough examination of the terms and conditions of service in the army. The news of this committee bolstered the hopes of the opponents of short service: for example, in a flurry of letters from India, Roberts tried to drum up support for an extension of the terms of service. Roberts wrote to the Assistant Military Secretary at the War Office, Lieutenant-General J.H. Gordon that 'There can be no manner of doubt that the root of the whole question of recruiting for the British Army lies in India'.[56] Unfortunately for Roberts there was considerable doubt. Both Buller and Brackenbury wrote to Roberts arguing that however desirable it might be to extend the length of service in the colours and to increase the average age of soldiers, the recruitment climate dictated against this. The Wantage Committee provided perhaps the most severe put-down for Roberts by declining even to consider the efficiency of the army in India.

The dismissal of Roberts's opinions left the way open for Wolseley to conduct a review of the short service system and the efficiency of the home battalions on his terms. Indeed in his review of the evidence presented to the committee Roberts quite rightly pointed out that Wolseley and Buller had presented their evidence with the determination to defend the cause of the existing system and to allow only minor revisions to it.[57] The main concern of the Wantage Committee was to form an opinion on the efficiency of the home battalions. In this they were hampered by the lack of statistical evidence from those who claimed that the battalions were inefficient. Wolseley

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55 P.D. Trotter, 'Lord Wolseley's "Men"', Blackwoods, Vol. CXXXV, No. 821, (March 1884), pp 394-9. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index.
56 Roberts to Gordon, 10 Aug. 1891, Roberts Papers, N.A.M. 7101-23-82; Brackenbury to Roberts, 26 Sept. 1891, 7101-23-11
57 Roberts to the Duke of Cambridge, 16 Aug. 1891, NAM 7101-23-100/3

was singled out for praise in this respect in the summary of the committee's report for having at least presented 'a tolerably consecutive story', to illustrate his statements. Wolseley was forced to agree with the other witnesses on the overall inefficiency of the home battalions in saying that 'I do not know a single battalion outside the Guards fit to go into the field and fight against any European nation' but added the crucial rider omitted by most other witnesses that this was of no consequence 'provided a thoroughly efficient Reserve of about 80,000 men is maintained'.[58] The truth of this rider will be examined in the following chapter. Wolseley, his colleagues and the members of the committee were, however, unanimous in saying that the home battalions were inefficient in carrying out the task of providing drafts for their foreign battalions.

It was in this area that Wolseley perceived the need for the greatest adjustment or change. It was generally agreed that the Cardwell system of equality of battalions abroad and at home would neither be restored nor, even if it was, subsequently maintained. Wolseley made another attempt to uphold the system by suggesting that either battalions should be withdrawn from foreign stations, or the size of the army should be increased by the 12 battalions necessary to restore the balance.[59] The first was a solution already tried and was at best a temporary one, the second was costly. Therefore some alternative was necessary and Wolseley offered a suggestion. He made the often but inaccurately quoted statement that 'if these drafts are maintained for the battalions abroad, the battalions at home will be like a lemon when all the juice is squeezed out of it, they will be of little fighting use'. To counter this he proposed that a system should be set up whereby battalions in danger of having to send a large number of drafts abroad in the near future should be allowed to recruit over establishment in order maintain at least the numerical efficiency of the battalion.[60]

In his evidence Wolseley maintained that 'the home Army ought always to be the nursery for the Army abroad, and for the first line which is the Reserve' and that 'I would regard the home battalions as large depots'. Therefore he did not share to the same degree the concern of the

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58 Summary of the evidence given to the Wantage Committee, WO33/52
59 Evidence by Wolseley, Q. 8516, 4547, 8643
60 Ibid. Q. 4379-81. Wolseley is commonly quoted as having referred to the home battalions as 'squeezed lemons'.

regimental officers that the recruits coming forward were of too low a standard for hard work. Wolseley argued that a few years' training was sufficient to build up the physique of even the special enlistments, and that since the home battalions were a 'nursery' the physique of the recruits on enlistment was of minor importance.[61] Nevertheless he repeated his calls for an increase in pay. He suggested that 'a small increase of 1d. or 2d. a-day would not do; the day for tinkering at this question is past and gone, you must substantially add to the pay of the soldier if you wish to have an efficient Army on a voluntary principle'. Unlike other witnesses he did not propose a further reduction in stoppages: far from it, Wolseley wanted an overall increase of pay of 6d. for the home army and of 1s. to those serving abroad out of which the soldier would pay for everything except his outer clothing. He remained in favour of deferred pay because of the need to maintain a large Reserve.[62]

The Wantage Committee embarked on its proceedings with the hope that it could draw up a workable system while maintaining the principle of short service. The evidence it had heard painted an alarming picture of the state of the home army, but the committee was apparently incapable of suggesting any radical reworking of the existing system that might remedy the defects. Instead the report of the committee proved to be disappointing: far from the far-reaching revision of the Cardwell system that had been hoped for by many military men, it merely proposed minor alterations. Deferred pay was to be replaced by a gratuity of £1 for each year of service; in the meetings of the War Office Council to discuss the report, senior officers like Buller and Wood, who had given evidence against deferred pay, were forced under pressure from Stanhope to retract their statements. As a result deferred pay was not abolished till 1898. Against Wolseley's wishes a recommendation was made for the abolition of all stoppages and for the modification of the clothing regulations. The committee did support Wolseley, however, in calling for an increase in pay up to the market rate for unskilled labour. The War Office Council, though, argued that 'it is considered that an increase of battalions is more important than an increase to soldiers' pay. It was

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61 Ibid. Q. 4674, 4454
62 Ibid. Q. 4467-74

not considered that an increase would get either more, or a different class of men'.[63] The result was that little was done at once and Wolseley, once he became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in 1895, was forced to readdress most of the questions considered by the Wantage Committee and to press again for an increase to the number of battalions and for increased pay to stimulate recruitment. This will be considered in a later chapter.

The Wantage Committee was unanimously in favour of the retention of the short service system yet it made few concrete suggestions as to how the working of the system could be improved. Indeed, given the social and political climate of the age it is difficult to see what alternatives could have been adopted. So long as the ideas of an Army Reserve were upheld and the principle of one army serving anywhere in the world was maintained, neither long service nor a separate army for India could be given serious consideration. The only alternative was conscription. This would eradicate the problems caused by unpredictable recruitment and provide a ready number of soldiers to serve wherever in the world they might be needed. Looking at the European countries with conscription Wolseley saw another advantage,

> This improves the physique of their people to a very considerable extent, shields them from the serious plague of panic, and strengthens the self-reliance of the Nation. Are we too cowardly and too ease-loving a people to pay this personal tax? I would not believe it.[64]

This is apparently the only occasion on which Wolseley came close to calling for conscription, which was seen as totally unacceptable within political circles and found little favour in military ones before the Boer War. He was more frequently prepared to call for compulsory physical education in schools to compensate for the poor living conditions in the large urban areas.[65] It was not until the Boer War had shown the public the appalling physical state of the men of the country that action was taken on this in the 1902 Education Act.

The evidence supplied to the Wantage Committee demonstrated without question that the Cardwell system had failed to improve the efficiency of the army, nor had it achieved any

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63 Meetings of the War Office Council, 4, 19 March and 1 Nov. 1892, WO163/4b; Summary of the Recommendations of Lord Wantage's Committee and of the discussions thereon at various War Office meetings, WO33/52

64 Notes for autobiography, WPP SSL8

65 For example Wolseley's numerous addresses to Volunteer and Militia units which were then reproduced in The Times.

economy. The British Army was as inefficient and as expensive as it had been before Cardwell came to office. Yet Wolseley continued to defend the system, and Arnold-Forster made a good point when he claimed that 'Sir Garnet Wolseley, in common with some others, seems to be of opinion that the failure is rendered less important by proving that, after all is said and done, things were just as bad twenty or thirty years ago'.[66] The reasons why Wolseley continued to defend the system can be identified as threefold: his belief that his career depended on it; the lack of any politically, socially, financially, and militarily acceptable alternative; and his continued belief that the system had never been allowed to function as intended. Wolseley identified two major reasons why the system could not work as well as it might: one was the conservative figure of the Duke of Cambridge, who was never totally reconciled to the system, and the other was government parsimony. The first problem was solved by the Duke's retirement in 1895 and the appointment of Wolseley to the position of Commander-in-Chief. The second was one that would continue to challenge Wolseley after 1895 and his efforts to achieve a workable army system then will be examined in a later chapter.

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66 H.O. Arnold-Forster, 'A Civilian's Answer to Sir Garnet Wolseley', Nineteenth Century, Vol. IX, No. 52, (June 1881) pp905-16

Chapter 4 - The Army Reserve

Recent historiography has tended to ignore the subject of the Army Reserve. While it has been accepted that the creation of the Reserve was the reason behind the introduction of short service, the Reserve has then been relegated to a minor position in surveys of the Cardwell reforms rather than treated as a subject calling for detailed examination. When the Army Reserve has been discussed, its purpose has often been misunderstood. This chapter will not attempt to examine the whole subject of the Army Reserve but will focus on what Wolseley thought of the Reserve and how he attempted to put his ideas into practice.

Wolseley stands out as a figure who had a firm idea of the purpose of the Army Reserve. He believed that it formed an essential role in the organisation of a modern British Army, and held strong ideas on how it should best achieve its functions. He ascribed such an important role to the Reserve that his belief in its necessity caused him to accept, albeit reluctantly, the damage to the efficiency of the home army that would be caused by the maintenance of such a Reserve. This chapter will examine why Wolseley believed in the need to build up a Reserve, the size of Reserve he wanted, and how he envisaged its organisation, training and functions. Wolseley occupied such positions during the period under discussion as to make him a figure whose opinions it was impossible for contemporaries to ignore; not only did he hold high positions within the War Office, which enabled him to take part in all important decision-making processes on the subject of the Army Reserve, but also, as a commander in the field, first in 1878 when he was to have been second-in-command to Lord Napier for an expedition against Russia during the Eastern Crisis, and later when reservists joined the battalions under his command in Egypt and the Sudan. As a field commander in Egypt in 1882 Wolseley could comment on the usefulness of the reservist once recalled to the colours, something no other general of the period was in a position to do until the Boer War in 1899.

In his numerous articles in various publications Wolseley made public what he believed were the reasons for the establishment of the Army Reserve. He reminded the public that in the

pre-Crimean War era 'the commonly accepted idea with us was that a standing army should be maintained so that, if we went to war, it should be the force to take the field - that we should trust to luck, or to the plans of the moment, to keep the ranks full whilst hostilities lasted.' Wolseley argued that the events of the Crimean War had demonstrated that once the resources of the standing army had been exhausted the only option open to the military authorities was to despatch untrained recruits to the seat of the war. The War Office learnt its lesson and a Reserve force was created in 1859, and a further Reserve in 1867. These Reserves were largely a failure - by 1870 they contained only 2,000 men instead of the intended 20,000. Wolseley argued that it was only 'the Franco-Prussian war [which] taught us the absolute necessity for the creation of a trustworthy Army Reserve of well-trained men in the full vigour of their manhood'.[1] The result was the establishment of the Army Reserve under the terms of the 1870 Army Enlistment Act, whereby henceforward a soldier would serve for six years in the colours and six in the Army Reserve.

These facts are not open to dispute; the perceived functions of the Army Reserve are more controversial. The Reserve formed a vital role in Wolseley's picture of the ideal British Army. He stated that for financial as well as organisational reasons 'the maintenance of an army strong enough to meet our military requirements is only possible by having about two-thirds of it in a reserve employed in civil life'.[2] Wolseley's opinion was that the home battalions should be little more than training schools for the battalions abroad. Far from deprecating this development as an apparently inevitable consequence of the Cardwell reforms, Wolseley applauded it. When he told the Wantage Committee in 1891 that 'I do not know a single battalion outside the Guards fit to go into the field and fight against any European nation', Wolseley was not admitting that the army system was a failure but rather he was drawing attention to the fact that he believed that the creation of the Army Reserve had been a success.[3]

In his speech to the House of Commons during the debates on the Army Enlistment Bill, Cardwell stated that 'the object of the Bill is to have a Reserve Force; not... trained in the Militia, but trained in the Army, by the Army, and for the Army, and constituting in the moment of

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1 Wolseley, 'The Army'; Barnett, p295
2 Wolseley, 'England as a Military Power...'
3 Evidence by Wolseley to the Wantage Committee, Q. 8516

emergency a Reserve upon which the Army may rely'.[4] In such an emergency the Reserve would bring the small peace time cadres up to their war establishment. Wolseley took this to mean that the Army Reserve was to be a body of trained men temporarily released from service with the colours after having been fully trained, who would, in the event of the standing army becoming involved in a major war either abroad or in defence against invasion, be a reservoir from which the battalions earmarked for action could be brought up to their war establishment. This would enable untrained men, and those soldiers too young to serve abroad, to remain behind in the regimental depot until they reached the age or standard to enable them to take their place in the fighting line. In this way the Reserve was to be a *substitute* for a portion of the home army. It was also to be a *supplement*: the Reserve would provide the men to replace the casualties of war. But was Wolseley correct in his assessment?

There is some strong evidence to demonstrate the correctness of Wolseley's opinions. In the debates over the proposed recall of the Army Reserve in 1878 during the Eastern Crisis Disraeli said

> Unfortunately, the name for this Force is not a very felicitous one; it is called the Reserve Force, and it is called the Militia Reserve Force. But the world associates with the word Reserves some resource that is left to the last, that is only to be appealed to in great emergency, and is to be the ultimate means by which you can effect your purpose... It is not the last resource, but it is the first resource under our system.[5]

The Secretary of State for War Gathorne Hardy endorsed this statement. Further evidence is provided by the report of the Wantage Committee in 1891. The report defined the purposes of the Army Reserve as: firstly, to raise units from peace establishment to war establishment; secondly, to take the place of soldiers who were too young to be sent abroad or were still recruits; thirdly, to replace the medically unfit; and lastly, to 'retain sufficient men in reserve in the second line to fill up the casualties occurring at the front, until such time as the men left behind as recruits, or as immature, have become sufficiently trained or physically developed to take their place in the fighting line'.[6]

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[4] Hansard, 16 May 1870, Vol. CCI
[5] Hansard, 8 April 1878, Vol. CCXXXIX
[6] Report of the Wantage Committee, para. 98,

Many influential figures disagreed with Wolseley's opinions. The general public, whose opinions were ably directed by Dilke and Arnold-Forster, assumed that the Army Reserve was meant to be a reserve in the true sense of the word, rather than a substitute for the inefficient men in the army.[7] It may be argued that the controversy over the purpose of the Reserve arose because there was a general confusion between intention and requirement. The establishment of the Army Reserve provides the strongest point in the argument that the Cardwell reforms were a pale imitation of the German military system and unsuited to British military requirements. Wolseley's definition of the Army Reserve as a reservoir for filling up home battalions in the case of a major war would not have caused dispute had it not been for the fact that apart from 1878 and, arguably, 1885, Britain was in little danger of becoming involved in an expedition abroad against a first-class military power. Instead Britain was destined to fight a number of 'small wars' for which the home battalions needed strengthening, but there was no means by which this could be done under the terms of the Army Enlistment Act.

The Duke of Cambridge and Roberts emphasised this flaw in the Cardwell system. Both were in favour of long service, but the Duke was prepared to make proposals as to the means by which battalions despatched for small wars could be efficient under the short service system. He faced two major problems: in the first place, as battalions rose up the roster for foreign service they increased their establishments by recruiting. This increased the number of inefficient men in each battalion. Secondly, as the last chapter showed, an increasing number of regiments had both battalions abroad, and the government refused permission for the regimental depots to be increased in size in compensation. Wolseley lent his support to all the Duke of Cambridge's efforts to secure increases in the size of the establishment of the army. He was well aware that the home army was too small to undertake its manifold responsibilities but he was equally adamant that this was a question quite separate from that of the functions of the Army Reserve. Wolseley never doubted that the Army Reserve was primarily a substitute for and secondly a supplement to the home army. It was only after he became Commander-in-Chief that Wolseley seriously considered the question

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[7] Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, p107; Dilke, British Army, p43

of the requirements for small wars. The arguments put forward then will be discussed in a later chapter.

It is now necessary to question whether the Reserve could actually fulfil Wolseley's definition of its functions. In other words, could the Army Reserve bring the home battalions up to war strength and at the same time have enough men left over to act as a general reserve for the whole fighting army? The key to the question was the size of the Army Reserve. In 1871 Cardwell had told Parliament that with an estimated number of 32,000 recruits per year the Reserve should reach 60,000 men by 1883.[8] It is obvious from the table below that this proved to be an impossible target.

Date	Army Reserve 1870	Army Reserve 1882[9]	Total Reserves
1874	7,376		31,046
1879	15,085		37,512
1884	34,589		43,185
1889	47,301	3,040	53,195
1894	71,507	8,842	80,530
1899	62,034	16,764	78,833

Table 4.1 - Return of the Army Reserve on 1 January - Taken from General Annual Returns of the British Army, c.1323, 2731, 4570, 6196, 7885, 9426

In order to prove the detractors of the short service system wrong Wolseley had to ensure that the Reserve reached the largest size possible so that it would be large enough to fulfil the functions he had ascribed to it.

The first problem to overcome was caused by the fact that the number of men transferred from the colours into the Reserve was to a large degree dependent on the number of recruits entering the army, therefore as recruitment fluctuated so did the size of the Reserve. This link became evident early in the life of the Army Reserve. In 1873 Cardwell was forced to admit to the Queen that 'the Army Reserve has not been completed during the year now drawing to a close, on account of the falling off in recruiting during a portion of the year...'. In 1875 Cardwell complained to Campbell-Bannerman that the military authorities had the tendency to check

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8 Bond, 'Recruiting the Victorian Army'
9 This Reserve dates from 1882 when the terms of enlistment were altered to seven years in the colours and five in the Army Reserve.

recruiting when the army was over establishment, instead of passing trained men to the Reserve.

Wolseley had already made this point in a memorandum written earlier that year arguing that

> I would recommend it should be an established rule that in every arm of the Service all men found each month in excess of the establishment of that arm, should be allowed to enter the Reserve monthly, irrespective of whether other arms were or were not below their respective establishments.[10]

The intention behind this recommendation was good: the conservative elements within the army did try to retain as many experienced men as possible in the ranks rather than recruit inexperienced men or send the best to the Reserve. However, Wolseley's proposal was also a reflection of a major fault in military affairs during this time: it showed a lack of long-term planning. No yearly plan was drawn up in the various units of the army to establish whether an excess one month or year might not become a deficit in the following month or year. This fault is evident on examination of the General Annual Returns of the Army which shows that the establishment of the army swung periodically between being in excess and in deficit.

There were conservative elements in all branches of the army who objected to the introduction of short service and the establishment of the Reserve and the cavalry stands out for particular consideration. Wolseley drew the attention of the Duke of Cambridge to this in a memorandum at the end of 1885:

> If the return of the Army Reserve men in the Cavalry Regiments is examined it will be seen that it is by no means satisfactory. Whilst nearly every Infantry Regiment has now a considerable number of men borne as supernumeraries but in the Army Reserve, there is only one Cavalry Regiment of the Line that, in the event of its being ordered on active service, could embark in an efficient condition and up to war strength'

The commanding officers of cavalry regiments were particularly inclined to check recruiting when they were over establishment instead of sending trained men to the Reserve. Wolseley understood the reason for this state of affairs:

> There is a sort of superstition that a Reserve man, especially of the Cavalry, is of little use as a soldier when he rejoins his regiment for service... But even if he were not first rate, still he must be far better than the man who will leave his regiment for the sake of £1 bounty money.[11]

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10 Cardwell to Queen, 6 Dec. 1873, Cardwell Papers, PRO30/48/5; Cardwell to Campbell-Bannerman, 23 June 1875, Campbell-Bannerman Papers, BM 41212; memo. by Wolseley, 15 Jan. 1875, WOP W37

11 Memo. by Wolseley on the Cavalry Reserve, 28 Dec. 1885, Smith Papers, WO110/6

This last point played on the fears of the Duke of Cambridge. Throughout his service as a commander Wolseley had had to contend with the Duke's objections to his practice of taking volunteers from other regiments to strengthen the battalions he was commanding on active service. Even the Duke had to admit that Wolseley had a point: in 1884 he had been forced to acquiesce to Wolseley's formation of the Camel Corps in the Sudan because he could not supply Wolseley with regiments of fully trained and efficient cavalry. Wolseley also went behind his superior's back and sent his memorandum to the Secretary of State W.H. Smith so that the Duke could not suppress the memorandum in order to maintain the conservative nature of the cavalry. A year later Smith did indeed take action, informing Wolseley that he intended that future practice should be to send surplus men to the Reserve rather than to check recruiting.[12]

Developments outside Wolseley's control also acted against the rapid increase in the size of the Army Reserve. The Indian military authorities demanded more soldiers and as the Indian establishment grew in this period so did the demand for drafts from the home battalions. Consequently there was an increase in the number of re-engagements to meet the demand for experienced men and a shortfall in the number of soldiers transferred to the Reserve. The problem was also worsened by the need to retain a significant garrison in Egypt which also needed drafts from home to maintain its establishment. One solution to these difficulties, supported by Wolseley, was the increase in the number of three-year enlistments. This served, in particular, to increase both the recruitment and the Reserve of the Foot Guards. Nevertheless, the addition of a significant number of soldiers with what was generally accepted to be the minimum period of training created a problem of its own with reference to the Reserve: these soldiers would need further training while in the Reserve to maintain their efficiency, and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

By the time the Wantage Committee met in 1891 to examine the questions of the organisation and efficiency of the home army, the Army Reserve had reached a significant size and should have been capable of fulfilling its role. Wolseley defined this role in a letter to the Duke of Cambridge in which he said that 'there is no Line Battalion fit for service, but neither is

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12 Wolseley to Smith, 30 Dec. 1885, Smith Papers, WO110/3; Smith to Wolseley, 28 Dec. 1886, WO110/6

there a German Battalion under arms at this moment fit for war. The fighting line of every nation is in Reserve'.[13] The figures initially appear to bear out Wolseley's statement: on the eve of the Wantage Committee in 1891, the total home establishment of all arms was 104,591 men; the total Army Reserve was 59,216. Of the home establishment 79,639 men were deemed effective, in other words aged 20 or over and had been in training for at least a year. Therefore a total of 24,952 soldiers or 23.8% of the home establishment would have to be replaced by men from the Army Reserve, leaving a total of 34,264 soldiers to act as a reserve to replace the casualties of war. This seemed to be an improvement on the situation during the Crimean War, but it must be remembered that these figures assume an even number of effectives in each battalion,[14] that no drafts would be sent to any battalions abroad other than to those at the front, and that the war would be of short duration so that the Reserve would not be used up replacing casualties and acting as a reserve and reinforcement to the battalions at war before an equivalent number of men had reached the age and standard of efficiency to be sent abroad. Wolseley knew only too well that the efficiency of the home battalions was decreasing in this period due to the factors described in the previous chapter. He also knew that the situation was unlikely to improve, and that as a result claims would be made that the creation of the Army Reserve had not solved problem of supplying an expeditionary force with reinforcements and replacements. Wolseley would therefore have to ensure that the men of the Army Reserve would be fit to take their places in the ranks on their recall to the colours.

In his speech at Mansion House in 1881 Roberts argued against short service and the Army Reserve on the grounds that 'I take leave to doubt whether we can always depend on securing the services of the reserve we are slowly forming...'.[15] This was a fear shared by Wolseley and other supporters of the Cardwell system, but it proved to be groundless. The Army Reserve was mobilised on three occasions before the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 with the following results:

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13 Wolseley to Cambridge, 25 June 1891, in Verner, p365
14 The Infantry and Garrison Artillery were the branches of the army shortest on effectives.
15 The Times, 14 February 1881

Date	Reason	Summoned	Replied	Medically unfit	Joined regt.
3 April 1878	Russo-Turkish War	14,154	13,684	747	12,935
25 July 1882	Egypt	11,649	11,032	449	10,583
20 April 1885	India	2,492	2,309	138	2,171

Table 4.2 Mobilisation of the Army Reserve - taken from General Annual Returns of the British Army.

These figures show that the response to the recall to the colours was on each occasion over 90%, demonstrating that in this area the Army Reserve was a successful organisation. In addition to this, volunteers were called for from the Army Reserve for service abroad on four other occasions, and there was a general call-up of reservists for training with the new magazine rifle in 1890 and 1891; these topics will be discussed later in this chapter.

Having established that the men in the Army Reserve would return to the colours when recalled it is now necessary to examine their usefulness once recalled. It must be admitted that the evidence is fragmentary. For example, Maurice made no reference to the Reserve in his official history of the Egyptian campaign, beyond noting the day of its mobilisation; nor did Wolseley mention the reservists in his despatches. In his article 'The Army' in 1887 Wolseley claimed that on the subject of the conduct of the Army Reserve men when recalled 'the result was most satisfactory'. In his evidence to the Wantage Committee the Duke of Cambridge stated that 'the Reserve called out in 1882 behaved most admirably, and we were surprised how little they lost...'. In contrast, the anonymous author of an article in Blackwoods Magazine on the campaign in Egypt in 1882 took the opposite view; 'the infinity of trouble the Reserve men caused their officers, and the evil influence their conduct exerted on the younger soldiers, have been established beyond controversy'.[16]

It is worthwhile, however, to distinguish between the fighting qualities of the reservists and their conduct in the ranks. On the question of their fighting abilities it is known that 1,000 men from the Army Reserve took part in the battle of Tel-el-Kebir which suggests that this number of soldiers at least were highly efficient.[17] Indeed the number of highly efficient men may well be

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16 Wolseley, 'The Army'; evidence of the Duke of Cambridge to the Wantage Committee, Q. 2238-9; W.E. Montague, 'The Late Campaign' in Blackwood's, Vol. CXXXII, No. 805, (Nov. 1882) pp654-74. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index.

17 Hansard, 26 Oct. 1882, Vol. CCLXXIV

greater when one takes into consideration the fact that many reservists, particularly from the technical branches, would have served only on the lines of communication. In 1897 a report was drawn up on the efficiency of men of the Army Reserve in 1882, 1885, and 1895. It included comments made in January 1883 by Wolseley and other commanding officers on the Army Reserve. The conclusions were that Wolseley and the majority of the commanding officers believed that although the reservist was less amenable to discipline he was efficient at his drill and had retained his powers of endurance on marches. The problem of discipline was worsened when the reserve men were sent to serve in different regiments from those with which they had originally served.[18] Wolseley was aware of this possible difficulty and his opinions on the subject will be examined later.

A large British garrison was retained in Egypt after the campaign to maintain law and order in the absence of an Egyptian Army. The service of a number of Reserve men was required and this created difficulties. In December 1882 the Duke of Cambridge wrote to the Secretary of State for War, Lord Hartington, that 'whilst active service lasts, the Reserve men understand the necessity for their presence; when peaceful occupation ensues, they become discontented and disturbed at not being allowed to return to their ordinary civil avocations'.[19] Wolseley could not comment on this state of affairs since he had already returned to Britain but there seems little reason to doubt that the reservists were worried that their employment might not be kept open for them if their return was delayed much longer.

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of the Reserve during the Egyptian campaign, there was still a question mark over the extent to which the efficiency of soldiers would be adversely affected by service in the Reserve. It must be remembered that the Reserve called out in 1882 had been absent from the ranks for less than two years. This question was of particular important with reference to the branches requiring specialised skills such as the artillery, the engineers, and the cavalry. Haliburton, while P.U.S., became convinced of the arguments of men like Wolseley, asserting that a trained field gunner remained efficient for five years after leaving the colours, and

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18 Report on the Efficiency of Men in the Army Reserve, 1897, WO33/57
19 Cambridge to Hartington, 22 Dec. 1882 in Verner, p304

a driver for three.[20] This suggested that there was no reason to doubt the efficiency of these men should they be recalled to the colours, and consequently no excuse for the Royal Horse Artillery and the Field Artillery to remain, as they did, frequently over establishment.

Wolseley argued against the 'superstition in the minds of our Cavalry officers that Cavalry soldiers under five years' service are worth very little'. He made the point that in the much admired German and Austrian cavalry regiments the soldier served for only three years before being passed to the Reserve. Furthermore Wolseley was convinced that a cavalry soldier was of little use after ten years' service because he had lost his nerve. Moreover, because the cavalry soldier frequently sought employment looking after horses after leaving the colours his efficiency in the area of horsemastership was usually unimpaired. Once recalled to the colours, though his knowledge of cavalry drill might be rusty, he was still able to release soldiers from jobs such as grooms or drivers without any retraining.[21] This belief was backed up by a report by the commander of the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 1st Army Corps, Lord Methuen in September 1895. He stated that the result of the mobilisation of this cavalry brigade had shown that the reservists were 'a good stamp of man, nearly all being in some permanent employ...'. The drivers and gunners had not forgotten anything and few were insubordinate.[22] Again it must be remembered that Methuen was referring to men who had only recently been transferred to the Reserve.

The Wantage Committee showed that it was not totally convinced by Wolseley's arguments. It reported that:

> Important evidence has been given before the Committee, tending to show that the Cavalry soldier transferred to the Reserve deteriorates rapidly in knowledge of his Cavalry duties, and that, after a comparatively short time, he becomes unfit to resume his place in the ranks without some preliminary training, though he may still remain fit for duties in the Transport service.

The committee also pointed out that there was a limit to the numbers required for transport and therefore recommended the extension of service in the cavalry to nine years with the colours and

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20 A. Haliburton, The British Army, (London, 1892) p15

21 The reserves in the German and Austrian armies were regularly called up for training. Regular training might have maintained a cavalry soldier's ability to ride in a charge, but Wolseley would have argued that the additional responsibilities that might have been taken on by a cavalry reservist, such as a wife and children, might have made him less reckless in action. Memo. by Wolseley, 28 Dec. 1885, WO110/3

22 Report on the mobilisation of 1st Brigade, 1st Division, I Army Corps, Methuen, 6 Sept. 1895, WO33/55

three in the Reserve.[23] In his evidence to the committee Wolseley did admit that the cavalry reserve was not as useful as that of the infantry but nonetheless repeated his claim that a sufficient number of drivers would be required so as to make the Cavalry Reserve a worthwhile institution. Since he himself provided the figure of 31 drivers per regiment it has to be said that doubt must be placed on the effectiveness of the cavalry reserve and that strong arguments did exist to suggest that the cavalry should have been treated separately from other branches of the army and the extension of service in the colours recommended by the Wantage Committee acted upon.[24]

The Egyptian campaign provides the only accurate assessment of the usefulness for war of the Army Reserve men since on the other occasions when the Reserve was mobilised it was not needed. Wolseley was aware that the Army Reserve might not function in war as well as intended in the future because the increasing number of three year enlistments and longer service in the Reserve meant that the reservist was not as experienced as he might be. For this reason Wolseley frequently urged that the Army Reserve should be called out regularly for training.

Under the law establishing the Army Reserve the Secretary of State for War had the power to call out the Reserve for 12 whole days or 20 drills a year. This was never put into practice and the Army Reserve was not trained except for small numbers of men who volunteered to take part in the autumn manoeuvres. The 1878 Airey Committee recommended that the Reserve should be called up for a month at a time 'provided that the whole amount of training did not exceed the aggregate 12 days for every year of his reserve service'. The Committee believed that training was only necessary for men in the third and fourth year of their reserve service.[25] These recommendations were not put into practice.

Until 1882 the men of the Army Reserve had to present themselves to the paying officers four times a year and would only receive their reserve pay once it had been proved that they were effective. The system was altered in 1882 so that the reservists were now paid by Post Office orders and were seen only by the medical and military officers once a year. Wolseley and the

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23 Wantage Committee, para. 122-3
24 Evidence of Wolseley to the Wantage Committee, Q. 4595
25 Report of the Airey Committee, para. 248

Duke of Cambridge were alarmed by this development and Wolseley wrote to the Under Secretary of State, the Earl of Morley that:

> His Royal Highness is of opinion that an inspection of the Army Reserve men by a military officer every three months, and an annual inspection by an Army Surgeon, would be the very smallest amount of inspection that we could depend upon to serve the objects for which the Reserve exists, and that this should be regarded as a temporary measure, for as soon as it reaches its normal size, His Royal Highness would urge most strongly that regulations be issued for insuring that every Reserve man undergoes some amount of periodical drill and of musketry instruction.[26]

As Wolseley repeated in 1883 the annual medical inspection, which cost £6000 a year, was money well spent since it ensured that all men receiving Reserve pay were efficient.[27] The effectiveness of this is demonstrated by looking at the fall in the number of men rejected as medically unfit between the call out in 1878 before the annual medical inspection had been set up and that of 1882.

The two principal objections to the regular training of the Reserve were cost, and the attitude of employers to the Army Reserve. Childers had been bombarded by a series of memoranda from Wolseley on the subject of training, and in 1882 he set up a committee under Wolseley's presidency to examine the means by which reservists could receive some form of annual training. The sittings of this committee began in June 1882 but were interrupted by Wolseley's trip to Egypt, and reconvened in February 1883. The committee's principal concern was to cause the least inconvenience to the reservist so that his employment would not be affected. To this end the reservist was to be given a free year to settle down in civilian life before being asked to select one of four systems of training for the remainder of his service with the Reserve. The options open to the reservist were: enrolment as supernumerary members of the Volunteers and qualifying as efficients therein; joining the headquarters of a regimental district or regular battalion for eight consecutive days' training; and joining a Militia battalion and training with it. For cavalrymen and Royal Horse Artillerymen there was the additional option of joining

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[26] Memo. on the training of the Army Reserve, 14 April 1882, WPP W/MEM/1; the subject was also brought up at a meeting at the War Office on 26 May 1882, WO32/8711

[27] Wolseley to Ralph Thompson, 14 May 1883, WO32/8713

Yeomanry regiments.[28] These options formed the basis of all discussions on the training of the Reserve for the remainder of the century.

Progress on the issue was slow. Throughout 1883 memoranda were passed between Wolseley, Hartington, the Surveyor General, and the Duke of Cambridge on the subject of annual medical inspections. The result was that four districts in England, two in Scotland and one in Ireland were called out for medical inspection in January 1884.[29] In January 1884 Wolseley drew the attention of the P.U.S. to the fact that the question of the training of the Reserve had not yet been settled. Wolseley pointed out that the actuaries' report on the proposals of his committee had concluded that for 1884 the cost of training would be £34,356 and that when the Reserve reached its estimated maximum size training would cost £83,014 annually, figures which Wolseley described as a 'small price to pay for efficiency'.[30] By 1887 the proposals as to how the Reserve was to be trained had been narrowed down to the first of Wolseley's committee's recommendations: training with the Volunteers. Finance was the key question; should the reservists receive the capitation grant or not? Wolseley had no doubt that 'the capitation grant would indeed be a cheap rate to pay for maintaining our Reserve men in a condition of efficiency'. The Financial Secretary, Brodrick, disputed this, arguing that adding 20,000 reservists to the Volunteers would mean that the Volunteers would still be within their establishment but would cost an additional sum of £40,000 a year, which he doubted was the cheapest method of training the Reserve.[31] Wolseley was still convinced that the experiment was worth trying.

During the 1880s the Lee-Metford magazine rifle was gradually being introduced within the Army. At the end of 1889 Wolseley wrote to Stanhope pointing out that it would be necessary to call out the Army Reserve for training with the new rifle because 'an Army Reserve untrained in its use, would be of small value for the purposes for which it is maintained. This is a matter of

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[28] Report of the Committee on the Training of the First Class Army Reserve, 7 Feb. 1883, WOP W45

[29] Memos. on the Army Reserve, 6 July 1883; 14 August 1883; 6 October 1883; 31 October 1883. All WPP W/MEM/1

[30] Estimate as to the cost of annual training of the First Class Army Reserve, 5 Jan. 1884, WOP W45; memo. on the cost of training the Army Reserve, 3 Jan. 1884, WPP W/MEM/1

[31] Wolseley to Lord Harris, 17 August 1887; Brodrick to Harris, 22 August 1887; Wolseley to Harris, 13 Sept. 1887. All WO32/8715

pressing national importance'.[32] Stanhope agreed and in 1890-1 14,965 men were called up for training for three days; in 1891-2 the remainder were trained. Throughout the 1890s reserve men were called up regularly for musketry drill with the new rifle, but, rather oddly, no target practice was included in the training.

The evidence given to the Wantage Committee by the senior military men shows that they were unanimous in their desire that the Reserve should be trained. The Duke of Cambridge said 'I think the Reserve are a very fine body of men, but as we never see them, we do not know whether they are qualified to take their places in the ranks'. Buller repeated the arguments given above that the Reserve should be permitted to train with the Militia, the Volunteers, or with their own regiments. Whereas Buller would have been satisfied if the men in the Reserve trained for six days per annum Wolseley was adamant that the period should remain the same as in the existing regulations, i.e. twelve days. He wanted this period to be consecutive and, as he had recommended before, either with the auxiliary forces or with the regulars. The Wantage Committee reported in favour of periodical training of the Army Reserve '<u>without which no Reserve can fairly be said to be efficient</u>'.[33]

Beyond the question of cost, the chief factor limiting the use and training of the Army Reserve was the attitude of the employers. Wolseley was aware that this was a major limitation. In an article in 1878 he referred to the fact that a few years earlier the Reserve had responded well to being called out for drill but 'it was then found that in many instances the men who responded to the call... lost their situations in civil life, being discharged there and then by their unpatriotic employers, who said they would not have servants subject to such a liability'.[34] This danger was considerably greater in 1878 when the Army Reserve was called out during the Eastern Crisis. In response to a question asked in the House of Commons the Secretary of State for War Colonel Stanley replied that 'I believe that, in a very large number of instances, the men have had their employment kept open for them'. A month later the Under Secretary of State Viscount Bury was forced to admit that it was too early to tell how many had lost their jobs because of their reserve

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32 Memo. on Army Estimates, 16 Dec. 1889, WO33/39
33 Wantage Committee, para. 98. Underlining as in the report.
34 Wolseley, 'England as a Military Power'

service but it was known that only 1.5% of those called up had been unemployed at the time.[35] No accurate figures were ever drawn up, probably because the majority of reservists had been working as labourers whose employment was in any case mainly seasonal. In 1886, when Wolseley was again urging that the reservists should receive some form of annual training if only in the Volunteers corps, Campbell-Bannerman again raised the spectre of the unsympathetic employer. To this Wolseley replied that the men in the Volunteers were also in steady employment yet managed to qualify annually as efficients and to attend the annual general inspection on Easter Monday.[36] This argument had a strong degree of truth in it, yet the government was still shy of causing the slightest amount of inconvenience to the employers.

Concern over the attitudes of employers to men in the Army Reserve also coloured the terms under which the Reserve could be recalled for service. The Reserve had been constituted as a force only to be called out in the event of war or emergency by Royal Proclamation. The foreign policy of the period made it increasingly unlikely that Britain would be drawn into a major war. Instead the resources of the British Army were expended in a number of small wars. These wars, despite placing a great strain on the army at home, were not great national emergencies and therefore the experienced soldiers in the Army Reserve could not be recalled for service. For this reason the terms governing the use of the Reserve were subjected to re-examination. Professor Bond has suggested that 'gradually during this period there was a subtle change of opinion as to the purpose of the Reserve...'.[37] Just whose opinion was changed needs exploration. A.V. Tucker has argued that making the Reserve liable for service in imperial campaigns was advocated by Wolseley, Buller, and Haliburton.[38] Wolseley's opinions on the subject will be investigated and it will become apparent that they were not fixed.

The common practice for small wars was to bring the units marked for service on a given expedition up to their full effective establishment by taking volunteers from other units, and by calling for volunteers from the Army Reserve. Wolseley was adept at combining both methods

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35 Hansard, 22 July 1878, Vol. CCXLI; 6 August 1878, Vol. CCXLII
36 Memo. on training the Army Reserve, Wolseley, 29 Jan. 1886; reply by Campbell-Bannerman, 21 May 1886; response by Wolseley, 25 May 1886. All WO32/8715
37 Bond, 'Lord Cardwell's Reforms...'; Bond, 'Effect of Cardwell Reforms'
38 Tucker, 'Army and Society'

with success. In 1879 he took 905 volunteers from the Army Reserve with him when he went to South Africa to assume command from Lord Chelmsford during the Zulu War. In 1881 a further 900 volunteers offered their services during the first Boer War. In August 1884 Wolseley was again instrumental in securing the services of 1,791 volunteers to serve in the Sudan during the Khartoum expedition, and a further 2,077 served at Suakin the following year.[39]

Wolseley believed that the use of volunteers had been very successful and was content to see the practice continued. In 1881 the Financial Secretary Campbell-Bannerman put forward a proposal that would make men in the Army Reserve liable for recall to the colours for small wars during the first year of their Reserve service. (In 1881 Campbell-Bannerman appeared not to have considered the attitude of the employers unlike in 1886 as referred to above). This proposal met with the strong approval of the Adjutant General, Ellice, and the Duke of Cambridge. Both these men harboured strong objections to the practice of using volunteers from other units and believed that there was no guarantee that a sufficient number of volunteers from the Army Reserve would always be available in the future. Wolseley argued strongly against Campbell-Bannerman's proposal. He did not believe that the time had come for such a definite move away from the spirit of Cardwell's reforms. He argued that as the Reserve was still increasing in size its development should not be hampered. Making the Reserve men liable for service in small wars would damage their chances of gaining employment which might strengthen the arguments behind the demand for longer service in the ranks. Wolseley wanted the practice of calling for volunteers continued and in this he was supported by the Surveyor-General of Ordnance, General Adye.[40]

The Wantage Committee heard evidence on the question of using the Reserve for small wars. The Duke of Cambridge outlined the reasons why the question was under discussion: 'it was the intention that the battalions on the higher strength should be ready to take the field for small wars without calling on the Reservist, but by building up the higher establishments so rapidly we have filled them completely with boys as a rule...'. Wolseley claimed that the 'eight battalions of the First Army Corps are not supposed to be independent of being strengthened by the Reserve'.

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39 Haliburton, appendix 1

40 Memo. by Campbell-Bannerman, 9 Feb. 1881; memo. by Ellice, 14 Feb. 1881; memo. by Wolseley, 17 Feb. 1881; memo. by Adye, 18 Feb. 1881; all WO32/8709

He spoke in favour of giving the government the power to call out at least 10,000 to 20,000 men from the Reserve 'although the reason for doing so might not amount to a "great national emergency".' In other words these men should be available for small wars. This statement provides just about the only evidence that Wolseley was seriously considering the alteration of the terms of service for the Army Reserve. The committee admitted that it could not suggest any method by which the Army Reserve could be used for small wars. It shied away from recommending that the men in the Reserve should be liable for service during the first period of Reserve service, but did suggest that a list should be drawn up of men willing to volunteer to return to the colours in the case of a small war.[41] In other words it ignored Wolseley's evidence on this point and supported his earlier statements on the subject.

Despite the failure of the Wantage Committee to produce any concrete suggestions on the means of finding troops for small wars, while Wolseley was absent in Ireland the question of calling out the Army Reserve for small wars was continually under discussion. In 1892 Stanhope suggested making reservists liable for service for small wars during the first six months of their Reserve service and paying them more to compensate for this liability. Buller reported that the Duke of Cambridge was not in favour of such a proposal. Extra pay, he thought, would discourage the Reserve man from seeking employment, and in any case he believed that a call for volunteers from the Army Reserve would always achieve the numbers required. However, the Duke did want an amendment to be made to the Reserve Forces Act in order to allow the Secretary of State to request volunteers without recourse to a Royal Proclamation, which could only be issued when Parliament was sitting. Stanhope refused to countenance any amendment of the Act and in this he was supported by his successor as Secretary of State for War, Campbell-Bannerman.[42] The debate would be renewed when Wolseley became Commander-in-Chief.

Wolseley believed that the Army Reserve filled a vital role in Britain's new military system: it would be both a substitute and a supplement for the home army. This chapter has

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41 Evidence to the Wantage Committee: Duke of Cambridge, Q. 2022; Wolseley, Q. 8679; report of the Wantage Committee, para. 102

42 Memo. by Stanhope on calling out the Reserves for small wars, June 1892; memo. by Buller, 21 July 1892; reply by Stanhope, 21 July 1892; memo. by Campbell-Bannerman, 20 October 1892. All WO32/8718

described the difficulties Wolseley faced when attempting to create such a Reserve. His struggle for manpower described in the previous chapter reacted unfavourably on the Reserve, forcing it to become more of a substitute and less of a supplement to the home army. In addition, Wolseley fought a battle for funds for the regular training of the Army Reserve so that it would be capable of replacing in time of war, those soldiers in the home battalions deemed inefficient with trained former soldiers. An added complexity was that the terms under which the Reserve could be used had been designed with reference to the German model, the need to fight a major European war rather than the unique British requirement of small imperial wars. The Wantage Committee had been in favour of the existence of the Army Reserve, but had failed to make any concrete proposals on how it should be best maintained and utilised. Therefore the finance, manpower, purpose and use of the Army Reserve had still not been settled before Wolseley became Commander-in-Chief, and the continuation of the debates on these topics will be covered in a later chapter.

Chapter 5 - Wolseley's Drive towards a Modern Army

The previous two chapters have analysed Wolseley's approach to the manpower question and the Army Reserve within the framework of the Cardwell system. This chapter will consider Wolseley's role in the drive to create a modern British Army capable of fighting a well-armed enemy in Europe or in the Empire. It will examine Wolseley's response to the technological advances of his day when the improvements in the methods of manufacture provided armaments with greater ranges and accuracy. These new weapons called for a reconsideration of tactics and the methods of training and clothing the soldier for war. Greater firepower also called into question traditional values, such as the future of the *arme blanche* on the modern battlefield, and led to the search for innovations in tactics and equipment, such as the development of the machine gun and the birth of the mounted infantry.

Beyond the training and arming of the soldier Wolseley was also concerned with the command of these men. Society was changing during the period with the growth of professions whose governing bodies defined strict standards of attainment. Wolseley wanted the army to become a profession for its officers: they would have to meet certain standards on entry and prove their abilities before promotion to a higher rank. Furthermore Wolseley wanted the officers to pursue a more professional outlook on their work; to consider their duties more seriously than their status, and to concentrate their efforts on educating themselves and the men under their command in all things military. Wolseley's efforts in these directions will be examined. The greater responsibilities held by officers of field or staff rank led Wolseley to press for the operation of a policy of selection to ensure that the best men reached the top of their profession. This brought Wolseley into conflict with the conservatives who fought to retain the existing system of promotion by seniority.

Wolseley also took part in the debates on the higher organisation for war: as Adjutant General he assumed responsibility for the production of mobilisation plans. The complexity of the task of preparing the British Army for war led to the proposal made by the Hartington

Commission that the German model of a Chief of Staff should be introduced into the British Army. Wolseley's response to this proposal will be analysed.

In his drive for a modern army Wolseley naturally faced the opposition of the Duke of Cambridge. Again Wolseley attempted to mobilise the public to support his views. He used Sir Charles Dilke as a mouthpiece in 1888 when he was quoted in Dilke's book as saying that he:

> Thinks that our army is clumsily and badly organised, drilled on an obsolete system, and dressed in ridiculous and theatrical costumes, that its tactical instruction is far below what it should be, and that a large proportion of the superior officers are not fully competent to command in modern war.

In addition Dilke drew attention to Wolseley's demand for a force of at least two army corps to be ready with its regimental transport and complete quota of auxiliary services for offensive operations abroad operating on a previously worked out plan of mobilisation.[1] It will become clear that the Duke's opposition to change in many vital areas meant that during this period Wolseley could do little more than prepare the ground for the time when, he hoped, he would head the army and be in a position to create his model of a modern British Army.

The technological developments of the breech-loading rifle, magazine rifle, breech-loading artillery, and smokeless powder all combined to institute a major reconsideration of tactics. It must be admitted that Wolseley's interest in tactics was transitory. His writings on the subject were limited to his entry for the Wellington Prize essay competition in 1872 and what he wrote in the various editions of the Soldier's Pocket Book. He was not an innovator in this area, leaving such work to men like Robert Home and George Henderson. He did, however, concentrate on two subjects of major importance: musketry and the size of the tactical fighting unit. The longer ranges over which modern rifles could be fired called for an increase in the skill on the part of the soldier and hence for more musketry training. During 1881 Wolseley was a member of the Musketry Committee assembled under the chairmanship of General Lysons. This committee recommended that every recruit should receive one recruits' course and one trained soldiers' course in musketry before being sent abroad. A soldier would fire 300 rounds in his first year and 200 rounds in subsequent years. The companies should be trained annually and the results published. At a

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1 Dilke, British Army, p140; cf. Wolseley to Dilke, 19 Nov. 1887, Dilke Papers BM 43914

meeting at the War Office it was decided that these proposals would be too expensive to put into effect and the number of rounds to be fired was consequently halved.[2] In his comments on a lecture given to the United Services Institute in 1878 by Lieutenant F.J. Graves, Wolseley argued that 'the days when men prodded one another with bayonets are past and gone; and I think you should look at the rifle as a thing that shoots, and not as a thing with a bayonet at the end for the purpose of killing with'.[3] Wolseley admitted in his numerous speeches to Volunteer units that space and cost were major obstacles to the improvement of musketry within the army. He argued against the promotion of the skilled marksmanship of a few men in order to win prizes at the annual Wimbledon rifle competition and urged greater emphasis to be placed on the training of a battalion to have a higher average of good shots in its ranks. Furthermore shooting at fixed targets was of limited value; Wolseley argued that men should practise shooting over unknown ranges and at moving targets.[4] There is little doubt that the British Army did not shoot well; reports after the First Boer War and the Egyptian campaign drew attention to this.

Wolseley's command in the Ashanti war in 1873-4 taught him a vital lesson that was equally applicable to all theatres of war: when in contact with the enemy, soldiers tended to form into small groups. In the case of the Ashanti war the small groups had evolved naturally from the difficulties caused by fighting in thick bush, but Wolseley argued that in any case the development of breech loaders required the adaptation of tactics from close order to open order. As on the Gold Coast, this would require more officers. This theory assumed vital importance in the debate in 1877 on the tactical organisation of a battalion. The German Army operated on the system of four large companies per battalion while the British Army still retained the old system of eight and therefore the War Office reconsidered the advantages of each system. Wolseley was adamant that the German model should not be adopted in this area without very serious consideration. He was in favour of the retention of the eight company system on the grounds that 'the maximum strength

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[2] Report of the Committee on Musketry Instruction, 22 Sept. 1891 WO33/37; War Office meeting, 18 Jan. 1882, WO163/3

[3] J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 22, 1878, pp120-54; The bayonet was an indispensable weapon for hand to hand fighting, as Wolseley knew from his experiences in the Crimea, India and China. The British Army continued to emphasise the role of the bayonet before and during the First World War despite the evidence from that war showing that firepower killed far more of the enemy.

[4] For example, The Times 25 Jan. 1886, 20 Jan. 1887, 28 Jan. 1889

of the company can in fact be almost mathematically determined by the physical laws controlling the powers of the human sight and voice'. He pressed for an increase in the number of junior officers per battalion so that no fighting unit should contain more than 100 men, the number Wolseley believed was the maximum one man could control. In the event Britain retained her eight company system since there was no overwhelming evidence against it. As the Adjutant General Ellice dryly pointed out the whole debate had arisen as a means of placing a company under a major and therefore 'simplifying certain questions as regards the promotion and retirement of officers'. The debate was revived briefly in 1889; however, Wolseley again managed to convince the Duke of Cambridge of the value of small tactical units.[5]

The increase in the skill required to operate modern armaments and the shift towards open order on the battlefield placed greater stress on the intelligence of the individual soldier. Wolseley had largely failed, for reasons enumerated in an earlier chapter, to encourage better educated men to enlist in the army. Consequently, although the nature of modern warfare had changed significantly, the raw material, the men, had not. Nevertheless Wolseley fought to modernise the drill taught to these men from the dregs of society. As early as 1871 Wolseley wrote that 'it is by no means desirable that his individual intelligence should be stifled by the process [of discipline], for of all things it is essential that he should possess sufficient common sense to tell him when, and how, he should in front of the enemy make use of the rules he has learnt'.[6]

The Duke tended to judge the quality of the army on its ability to perform the complicated manoeuvres required for the public parades in Hyde Park. Wolseley disagreed: in a letter written to the Duke in 1883 Wolseley argued that 'our military training is too much sacrificed to show parade movements, and that the soldier can be better disciplined, both in body and in mind, by being taught the duties and evolutions he must practice before an enemy, than by parade movements only possible in peace...'.[7] In fact, Dilke noted that Wolseley publicly pronounced the drill book Infantry Field Exercises 'to be as bad as it can well be'.[8] In September 1887 Wolseley

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5 Memo. by Wolseley on the company system, 6 March 1877; memo by Ellice, 8 March 1877, both in WO33/34; the British Army switched to the four company system of organisation in 1913.
6 Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements'
7 Wolseley to Cambridge, June 1883, RA E/1/10445
8 Dilke, The British Army, p246

wrote to the Duke presenting arguments for a new drill book. He wanted to establish a committee with himself as president to compare the British drill book with those of the French and German armies. He proposed that the members should be men with recent experience of war, and nominated Alison, Buller, Wood, Colonel G. Villiers, Colonel Swaine, and the two military attachés from Paris and Berlin. The Duke did not grant Wolseley his committee but a new drill book was produced in early 1889. In a speech reported in The Times in February 1889 Wolseley said of it that 'if it were read carefully and between the lines, it must be admitted that troops trained in accordance with the rules and regulations there laid down would be fit to meet the troops of any country in the world'. Nevertheless in private Wolseley complained to the Duke of Connaught that 'there can be no doubt that the new Drill Book is somewhat too minute' and that it still contained antiquities.[9]

In a letter to the Duke of Connaught in 1889 Wolseley stated that 'my notion of a good Battalion is one that can shoot well, so that it may be able to kill its enemies: that is thoroughly practised in outpost duties, night marches and in the tactical combinations of modern battles'.[10] There were many obstacles in the battle to achieve this ideal. Broadly speaking they were the conservative tendencies of the Duke of Cambridge, the organisation of the army, space, and expense. For example, the Duke allegedly objected to the practising of night marches on the grounds that it would tire out the cavalry horses.[11] Wolseley had little time for such petty objections and encouraged his followers to implement their own training schemes within their commands. For example, Wood was urged to extend his system of company training to the level of the battalion first in the Eastern Command based at Colchester, and later at Aldershot. Wolseley hoped that Wood's example would be copied in other stations across Britain. Wood began this task in 1889 and extended the system to the training of brigades as well and then to the handling of forces of all arms.[12]

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9 The Times, 22 Feb. 1889; Wolseley to Connaught, 30 Sept. 1889, WPP PLB/1
10 Wolseley to Connaught, 30 Sept. 1889, WPP PLB/1
11 Wood, Midshipman, Vol. 2 p200-1
12 Ibid. p198

Wolseley was hampered in his drive towards an improved system of field training by the organisation of the army. The army was not only spread across the Empire but was also fragmented into small bodies of men within the United Kingdom. Although Britain was divided into 66 military districts, within these districts battalions were often divided into even smaller units and distributed in garrisons in towns. Work was under way to concentrate the army in larger garrisons but the work was hampered by the concern felt by the Home Secretary that the army might be less available for the enforcement of law and order if concentrated in garrisons.[13] Therefore it was vital to hold regular manoeuvres and field days to train these men to operate in large bodies.

Possibly the two most vital points affecting the tactical training of the army were space and expense. Until the government purchased a large tract of land on Salisbury Plain in 1898 for military purposes the ground available for military manoeuvres was limited mainly to Aldershot and the Curragh. Apart from these areas the War Office depended on the willingness of landowners to permit their land to be used for military exercises. Wolseley was given the opportunity to witness for himself the value of large-scale manoeuvres both in 1871 and in 1872. He acted at the former as the Chief of the Staff to General Sir Charles Staveley and at the latter on the staff of General Sir John Michael. It was quickly apparent that many lessons could be learnt from the exercises; in 1871 the Duke of Cambridge wrote to Cardwell that the infantry had exposed themselves too much to direct fire, that they were bad at using the ground for concealment, and that the outpost duties were weak.[14] Wolseley wrote an article for Blackwood's Magazine on the 1872 manoeuvres which suggested that he had seen an improvement since the previous year particularly in the performance of the cavalry. He concluded that 'it is impossible to estimate in money, or even to describe fully in words, the advantages occurring to the combatants of our army from these manoeuvres'.[15] The government did not agree with Wolseley's assessment

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13 Bury to Smith, 4 & 16 Nov. 1885, Smith Papers, WO110/1. Viscount Bury, the Under Secretary, was the president of the committee on concentration.
14 Cambridge to Cardwell, late 1871, in Verner, p55
15 G.J. Wolseley, 'Our Autumn Manoeuvres' in Blackwoods Magazine, Vol. CXII, No. 685, Nov. 1872, pp627-44

and, apart from the 1873 Cannock Chase cavalry manoeuvres, subsequently refused to sanction the sums required in the Estimates for large-scale manoeuvres.[16]

Consequently the military authorities had to content themselves with small scale manoeuvres, few of which were a combination of all arms. While Commander-in-Chief in Ireland Wolseley had the opportunity of holding manoeuvres and seeing for himself what had been learnt by the army over the 20 years since the last large-scale manoeuvres. He reported to the Duke of Cambridge in 1892 that 'our manoeuvres here [Dublin] and at the Curragh have been somewhat depressing to me as yet, for they have displayed a sad want of tactical knowledge and military instinct on the part of all the Commanding Officers of Battalions and the Majors of Batteries'. The cavalry command broke up over distances; the artillery generally lost 'many guns during the action from want of tactical handling'; and the infantry attacks were 'absurd in conception and futile in execution'. He was considerably more heartened by the successful manoeuvres held in Cork the same month though he still felt that the commanding officers were weak in tactical knowledge.[17] Reports of other exercises, for example the manoeuvres of all arms held in Hampshire in 1891, tended to agree with Wolseley's assessment of the tactical abilities of the British Army.[18] These increased the pressure on the government to find the facilities and the finance for large-scale manoeuvres.

As Quartermaster General and then Adjutant General Wolseley was not directly involved in the procurement of equipment, which remained the province of the Ordnance Department. He was, however, interested in obtaining the most modern equipment for the British Army. Three developments in weaponry stand out for consideration: the introduction of the magazine rifle; the increasing interest shown in the function of machine guns; and the shift from muzzle-loading to

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16 For details of other manoeuvres see Bond, Staff College; in a speech at Hammersmith in December 1891 Stanhope presented additional reasons against the holding of manoeuvres:

> The limited amount of unenclosed ground, and the difficulty of finding a time of year when it could be attempted without unduly interfering with the ordinary work of our industrial population, of calling from their regular employment a number of Reserve men, and of withdrawing from the trade of the country a large amount of transport, and even the use of certain railways, would constitute, to my mind, such formidable obstacles, that any Government would hesitate to propose its adoption.

Haliburton, p8

17 Wolseley to Cambridge, 18 & 21 Aug. 1892 in Verner, p378-9

18 Report of the autumn manoeuvres in Hampshire, 20 Nov. 1891, WO279/1

breech-loading artillery. Wolseley contributed his opinions to the first two developments but showed very little interest in the technical aspects of artillery guns.

Wolseley was not a member of the committee which had met since 1883 to decide whether the magazine of the new Martini-Henry rifle should be detachable or fixed but he did ensure that his ally Wood was on it. Both Wolseley and Wood were in favour of detachable magazines but the committee recommended a permanent magazine with Wood dissenting. In the event the manufacturers had the final say by demonstrating that the manufacture of detachable magazines was both cheaper and easier.[19]

Wolseley's attitude towards the development of machine guns is worthy of consideration. In his contribution on the army to the essays edited by T.H. Ward for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 Wolseley wrote 'For years past many have striven in vain to introduce machine guns into our army; they were always met with the argument, "The Germans don't think anything of them"'.[20] While it is true that the War Office probably paid too much attention to developments in the German Army rather than concentrating on the unique requirements of the British Army, Wolseley's statement was unduly censorious of the Ordnance Department. In 1883 Wolseley announced that he understood the value of machine guns and believed they 'will take the place of considerable bodies of men' on the battlefield.[21] Nevertheless he was equally aware that the technology of machine guns had not yet reached the stage when they could be depended upon. Two Gatlings were used at Ulundi in 1879 but it was not until 1881 that various models available from Gatling, Nordenfelt and Gardner were subjected to trials at Shoeburyness. Wolseley was supplied with Gardner guns on the Khartoum expedition and the army borrowed six Gardner guns from the Navy when equipping the 1885 Suakin expedition. Wolseley was not favourably impressed by their reliability writing to the Surveyor-General of Ordnance in August 1885 that the Gardner had jammed at a critical moment during the battle of Abu Klea and that 'unless a better

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19 Wood, p186
20 Wolseley, 'The Army'
21 Wolseley's comments as chairman for a lecture by Col. C.B. Brackenbury 'The Latest Developments of the Tactics of the Three Arms', J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 27, (1883)

machine gun is to be had, I could not recommend any large expenditure at present upon such an arm'.[22]

From this memorandum it is clear that Wolseley had accepted that the machine gun was a weapon of the future once its technical failings had been corrected. He went on to make further suggestions as to the requirements for machine guns, such as being sighted for up to 3,000 yards, and detailed proposals on the weight and type of carriage. He pressed for the introduction of two machine guns into every cavalry and infantry brigade, giving a total of 14 guns per Army Corps. Unlike many of his colleagues in the artillery-dominated War Office, Wolseley had no doubt that the machine gun was primarily an infantry weapon and that to leave it with the artillery would be to fall into the same trap as the French in 1870 when machine guns had been hopelessly outranged. The pace of the debate over the arm to which the machine gun should be allocated increased by 1887 with the manufacture of the lighter Maxim gun. The gun itself weighed 40lb. and therefore could be handled by an infantry machine gun team in battle, but it was still fixed to a carriage weighing four hundredweight which limited its full manoeuvrability. The Maxim gun was technically superior to its predecessors both in range and rapidity of fire, and was less prone to jamming. Therefore Wolseley campaigned for the purchase of a quantity of them. He achieved limited success: the utility of machine guns as an infantry weapon was accepted but their cost meant that although each battalion was supposed to have one gun for instructional purposes by 1890, even in 1894 most soldiers were being trained on the outdated Nordenfelt and Gardner guns.[23]

Another innovation in which Wolseley showed great interest was the development of mounted infantry. Again the War Office looked abroad to see what other armies in Europe were doing and concluded that mounted infantry was an unnecessary luxury.[24] However, Wolseley had seen mounted infantry in action during the American Civil War and believed it had a role to play in the British Army during colonial campaigns. He was quite correct in his assessment: companies

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22 Report on the recent experiments with machine guns, 21 March 1881 WOP W41; Wolseley to Surveyor General of Ordnance, 27 Aug. 1885, WPP W/MEM/1; Précis of the history of machine guns, Nov. 1886, WO32/8901; J.Ellis, The Social History of the Machine Gun, (New York 1975) p57.

23 Ellis, p57-64

24 Report by Lieut. G.F. Browne, Intelligence Department, 21 Nov. 1881, WO33/37

were raised in South Africa for both the Zulu and Boer Wars, and Wolseley himself raised a mounted infantry column in Egypt in 1882. In Egypt the column was commanded by Captain Hallam Parr using men from the King's Royal Rifles and the South Staffordshire Regiment which had acted as mounted infantry in South Africa. Additional men were found from the Berkshire Regiment and the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, bringing the total up to 90 of all ranks.[25] The mounted infantry proved invaluable for the purposes of scouting close to enemy lines over terrain unsuitable for regular cavalry.

The debate turned towards the question of the maintenance of mounted infantry cadres in peace. At first the War Office opposed such proposals. Colonel Bower had written a drill book for mounted infantry in the early 1870s but the War Office had first lost it and then decided against publishing it at public expense.[26] The War Office was also alarmed by the idea, proposed by a few men, that the days of the *arme blanche* were numbered. Wolseley sought to soothe these fears: in 1883 he stated on the subject of the cavalry that 'their principal *metier* is to fight on horseback, and I hope they will never be converted into bad infantry', and in 1886 'I believe that the cavalry soldier ought to be taught to fight on foot when it becomes necessary to make him do so, but in my opinion to make him do so except in an emergency is a waste of power'.[27] Wolseley's opinions were accepted and attention was focused on how to raise the cadres. At first Wolseley in 1881 had spoken in favour of organising mounted infantry only when needed, in other words only in time of war. But he did agree with the Duke of Cambridge that 'whilst entirely objecting to the creation of Mounted infantry Regiments, I strongly advocate a certain number of men in all Battalions, say one Company, being at all times kept available for Mounted Infantry duties in the several Battalions of the Army'.[28] Wolseley perceived the main limitations on the provision of mounted infantry to be the size of the army and the cost of maintaining the horses necessary to train the infantry to ride. He felt that unless 5-10,000 men were added to the establishment the provision of an arm only to be used on some colonial campaigns would be seriously detrimental to the

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25 Report on the Mounted Infantry in Egypt, 16 Nov. 1882, WOP W20
26 2 July 1877, Hansard, Vol. CCXXXV
27 J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 27, (1883) pp439-84; J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 30, (1886), pp695-738
28 War Office meeting, 30 Dec. 1881, WO163/3; Cambridge to Hartington, 22 Dec. 1882, in Verner, p306

functioning of the already over-stretched infantry as a whole.[29] All the same he encouraged promoters of mounted infantry to press for funds to train a number of men from each infantry company to ride. He met with some degree of success: in 1898 a mounted infantry drill book was produced by Major E. Hutton which specified the composition of a mounted infantry force on the basis of one company per infantry battalion and two in each cavalry brigade. Unfortunately little had been done in this direction before the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899.

Since the size of the army and cost were the two major obstacles in the way of the provision of mounted infantry, Wolseley explored other avenues from which the men could come. In 1881 he drew attention to the deplorable state of the Yeomanry, which was badly under strength and poorly trained. Wolseley saw this body of troops as ideal for conversion into mounted infantry. He believed that given the strictly limited amount of time available for training, the Yeomanry could not possibly function as regular cavalry but could be trained to use guns rather than swords.[30] The Duke of Cambridge objected to this proposal, writing to Wolseley in 1890 'I am fully prepared to do all in my power to induce the present Yeomanry Regiments to attend more to their carbines than to their swords, but don't attempt to make mounted infantry of them; that would destroy the force and completely take the heart out of them'.[31] As a result the Yeomanry remained an unsatisfactory arm of the British Army till the end of the century.

Wolseley not only deplored the reluctance of the War Office to accept innovations but also waged a private war against the existing scheme for the manufacture and supply of approved equipment. The Khartoum expedition had revealed serious failures in the quality of the equipment given to the troops such as defective cartridges, saddlery, swords, and bayonets. The Superintendent of the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich was forced to admit that the 2.5" shells were often faulty. Wolseley called for an enquiry to be made into the Woolwich system, claiming that

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[29] J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 27, 1883; In a memorandum to the Duke on 25 November 1889 Wolseley wrote that if more horses could be obtained they should be given to the cavalry because 'The mounted infantry would degenerate into bad cavalry if they were permanently given horses'. He thought that infantry soldiers could learn to ride and care for horse during the winter months when the cavalrymen were on furlough. RA E/1/12509

[30] War Office meeting, 30 Dec. 1881

[31] Cambridge to Wolseley 26 Nov. 1890, in Verner p363; B. Bond, 'Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry' in M. Howard (ed.) The Theory and Practice of War (London 1965)

the system had not improved since he had complained, back in 1870, of the use of perished wood in the manufacture of gun carriages. The Surveyor-General of Ordnance tried to calm Wolseley by suggesting that the faulty shells had been an isolated incident. Wolseley replied with other examples: the star shells for the 7pr. gun were larger than the calibre of the gun; many of the 2.5" shells were empty; a large number of cartridges jammed; and many bayonets and swords were made of such poor material that they twisted when first used. He also drew attention to the unwillingness of Woolwich to consider new equipment such as breech-loading artillery, Nordenfelt machine guns and the Scott's sights for guns. The Government became involved in the dispute and set up a Royal Commission on Warlike Stores under the presidency of Sir James Stephen.[32]

Wolseley's experience of fighting in hot climates led him to campaign for a more practical service dress. In 1873-4 he had succeeded in clothing the men under his command for operations on the Gold Coast in cooler uniforms. After the Second Afghan War India had begun the process of introducing khaki uniforms for field service, but the British Army lagged behind. In 1881 Mr Wharton asked Childers in the House of Commons whether the reinforcements about to be sent out to the Boer War were to be dressed 'in their present conspicuous uniforms and accoutrements' or whether they would be clothed in 'a neutral colour'. Childers replied that the Duke of Cambridge was against any change in the colour of the uniforms.[33] This opposition to change was repeated by the Duke in a speech at the Mansion House in 1883:

> I should be sorry to see the day when the English Army is no longer in red. I am not one of those who think it is at all desirable to hide ourselves too much. I must say I think the soldier had better be taught not to hide himself, but to go gallantly to the front. In action the man who does that has a much better chance of succeeding than the man who hides himself.[34]

Wolseley did not believe that the ability to conceal himself would make any difference to the soldier's willingness to fight but neutral coloured uniforms would prevent unnecessary casualties through being conspicuous, and reduce the likelihood of heatstroke.

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32 Superintendent Royal Laboratory Woolwich to Director of Artillery, 25 Feb. 1886; Wolseley to Surveyor General of Ordnance, 2 March & 22 April 1886, all in WO32/7068; Royal Commission on Warlike Stores, (1887) XVI, (1888) XXV

33 18 Feb. 1881 Hansard, Vol. CCLVIII

34 Skelley, p62

Wolseley was the president of the Colour Committee which in 1882 recommended the introduction of grey for service dress and the retention of red or the traditional regimental colours for full dress.[35] The committee was also in favour of the replacement of white accoutrements with umber. The Egyptian campaign, fought in the heat of summer, lent an urgency to the question. Wolseley found an ally in the Duke of Connaught who wrote to the Duke of Cambridge that

> The clothing supplied to the men - viz., red serges and blue serge trousers - was thoroughly inappropriate to this climate, and the men suffer terribly from the want of a cooler and more comfortable dress. Khaki is the only sensible fighting dress for our men, and had they been dressed in it like the troops from India, it would have been an inestimable boost to all.[36]

Indeed the campaign history shows that the British Army suffered more casualties from heat stroke than from enemy action. The Queen's Private Secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby reported to Wolseley that 'the Queen thinks the Khakee clothing hideous and hopes she may never see it in England'. Ponsonby himself argued rather oddly that he felt that khaki was more visible than red.[37]

Wolseley was deeply concerned to make the officer corps of the British Army both a profession and professional. He dismissed complaints from officers about the effects of the short service system on the army in an article in The Nineteenth Century. He claimed that the reforms were unpopular solely because they added to the daily work of the regimental officer:

'Henceforward the mode of life of the regimental officer will have to be very different from what it used to be; many hours of idleness daily, the long periods of leave, must be abandoned; he must make up his mind to the constant drudgery of teaching his own men'.[38] In other words the officer must adopt a more professional approach to his work. This is the reason why, in 1886, Wolseley opposed the proposal of the Duke of Cambridge to abolish garrison instructors, telling the Secretary of State for War, W.H. Smith, that it was essential that the officers trained their own men so that both became educated in the art of war.[39] He campaigned for an improvement in the

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35 Report of the Colour Committee, 25 July 1882, WOP W45. The Colour Committee reported in favour of grey rather than khaki solely on the grounds that a khaki dye had not been developed for serge. This problem was soon overcome and the introduction of khaki made into selected battalions abroad and at home. cf. Hartington to Ponsonby, 9 March 1883, Devonshire Papers, 340.1338

36 Duke of Connaught to Cambridge, 20 Sept. 1882 in Verner p251

37 Ponsonby to Wolseley, 16 & 19 Jan. 1884, WPP

38 Wolseley, 'Long and Short Service'

39 Wolseley to Smith, 30 Nov. 1886, WPP PLB/1

pay of officers so as to encourage more men from the middle classes to take commissions. For example, it has been noted that Winston Churchill earned the equivalent of two years' pay as a subaltern in royalties in the few months after the publication of his book The Malakand Field Force. The Queen also shared Wolseley's alarm at the cost of being an officer, particularly in the Guards and cavalry regiments, where a private income was essential for survival.[40]

Wolseley may have criticised the regimental officer for being idle in peace, but he was favourably impressed by his performance in war. He told the Institution of Civil Engineers in December 1882 that in Egypt 'we had splendid soldiers commanded by splendid regimental officers'. He was criticised for this apparent change of heart by W.E. Montague in an article in Blackwoods Magazine the following year.[41] However, in a private letter written in 1887 Wolseley expanded his views on officers:

> The British officer is never, or at least very rarely, a loafer, as he is supposed to be by those who talk easily about the emptiness of life in the garrison at home. He is not lazy, but is far too intelligent to spend his time upon nothing but pipe-clay and hurdy-gurdy parades. Give him a chance of interesting himself in the training and welfare of the men, and he will work as hard as anyone. I never knew any body of men work harder than the regimental officers who were with me on the Nile. Why? because they had something worth working for.[42]

This belief added emphasis towards Wolseley's campaign for fewer parades and for more practical soldiering such as an increase in the number of field days and manoeuvres.

The state of the officer corps caused much concern in the aftermath of the abolition of purchase. To make the army a profession Wolseley believed that it had to have fixed standards for entry to officer training at Sandhurst and Woolwich, regular promotion by merit, and an even stricter system of selection to field and staff rank.[43] The most immediate effect of the abolition of purchase was a stagnation in the rate of promotion. Wolseley did give evidence to the 1876 Royal Commission on Army Promotion and Retirement, and to the 1878 Committee on the Reserve of Officers but he appears to have held no strong convictions on the length of time an officer should

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40 Anglesey, Vol. 3 pp90 & 100

41 The Times, 5 Dec. 1882; W.E. Montague, 'Red-Hot Reform' in Blackwoods Magazine, Vol. CXXXIV, No. 813, July 1883 pp66-87. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index

42 Private letter from Wolseley, 10 Jan. 1887 in Life of Wolseley, p229

43 For more information on the entry to and education provided by Sandhurst and Woolwich see Harries-Jenkins, chapters 2 & 4

spend in each rank nor on the ideal age of an officer of a given rank. He was in favour of a reserve of officers because he shared the Duke of Cambridge's concern that, should a major war break out, there would be an insufficient number of officers to supervise the Reserves and the new recruits. Wolseley was, however, extremely interested in the methods of promotion to rank of field and staff officer and it was in this area he concentrated most of his efforts towards making the British Army a professional body.

The battle to introduce selection for the higher ranks was perhaps Wolseley's hardest and longest fought. He faced the opposition of the Duke of Cambridge who was quoted in 1875 as claiming that 'a man who will stick to his regiment will learn his profession in that regiment much better than in any college'.[44] Wolseley himself never attended the Staff College at Camberley. His contribution to its increasing importance was strictly limited to pushing forward able instructors such as Maurice, Henderson, Clery, and Hildyard for appointments there, and to employing as many graduates as he could on his campaigns and encouraging young officers to sit the entry examination. Wolseley also faced the difficulty of how to make promotion by selection an impartial process which would not lead to accusations of favouritism and cause discontent within the officer corps from those officers passed over for promotion.

The existing system was broadly speaking one of promotion by seniority tempered by rejection. Wolseley claimed that this enabled too many mediocre officers to command regiments and then virtually automatically be promoted to higher commands. As early as 1872 Wolseley made public his unease; in an article for Blackwoods Magazine he wrote on the autumn manoeuvres that

> Judging from our selections made for our operations of both years, a stranger would be led to think that England was not rich in talented generals... With a few brilliant exceptions, it will be generally admitted that the great majority of generals and brigadiers employed this year were not men to whose care the lives of soldiers could be entrusted in war.[45]

Long service and position on the Army List were no substitution for talent. In a letter to Hartington written from the Sudan Wolseley complained that 'I can never persuade the Duke of

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44 Anglesey, p110
45 Wolseley, 'Our Autumn Manoeuvres'

Cambridge how few really good officers there are', and cited the example of Charles Wilson who assumed command of the force on the final advance to Khartoum on the grounds of seniority alone despite his inexperience of actual combat.[46] In his private correspondence he responded to personal appeals for advancement by disputing the idea that any officer had a right to promotion. He told Buller in 1893 that promotion by selection must begin at least at promotion to colonel, because once a man had become a commanding officer he would expect promotion to Major-General which would place him in an important command in the field should war break out.[47] Therefore it was necessary to ensure that those men promoted to regimental command should have the ability to go further in the army.

Even had Wolseley ever managed to persuade the Duke of Cambridge of the necessity for promotion by selection, he would still have had to devise a system by which the process would be impartial. It must be remembered that Wolseley faced constant criticism that he had surrounded himself with a 'ring' of men who relied on him for further advancement and frequently supported his opinions. There is little doubt that an impartial system would be hard to establish.[48] The veteran war correspondent W.H. Russell wrote to Wolseley in 1885 pointing out that 'in a hierarchy, as military commands must be, seniority cannot be got rid of'.[49] This alluded to the problem of what to do with the superseded officer who could not remain in the regiment where a junior officer had been promoted over his head, would be subjected to compulsory retirement, and would complain loudly of his ill-treatment. There was also the further problem of how to compare the value of officers serving in England with those stationed abroad or in India. Similarly only a limited number of officers had experience of war and there was apparently no way, in the absence of annual manoeuvres, for comparing officers in peace time.

Wolseley wrote to his bother Richard in November 1886 that 'we live in an era of selection' and in 1893 he appealed to Campbell-Bannerman on similar lines 'Will you lift us out

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46 Wolseley to Hartington, 28 Jan. 1885, Devonshire Papers 340.1649

47 Wolseley to Buller, 1893, quoted in Life of Wolseley, p263; Wolseley to Buller, 13 May 1893, WO32/6297

48 The Civil Service had established entry and promotion by examination in 1870. The army was in a different position because it was more difficult to assess the officers serving all over the Empire under different conditions.

49 W.H. Russell to Wolseley, 17 Aug. 1885, WPP

of the slough of Seniority Promotion?... The young school want to make the Army a real profession, in which the best men, made by their own exertions, rise to the top, as do lawyers, doctors, civil engineers, etc.'.[50] The establishment of the Promotion Board in 1890 went some way towards achieving this aim. The P.U.S. Ralph Thompson described it as 'a sort of advisory Board to H.R.H. to enable him to select the proper officers to recommend for promotion'.[51] The Duke of Cambridge naturally assumed that the establishment of the Board was a criticism of his choices and strongly remonstrated with Stanhope for insisting that Wolseley should be a member of the Board. Stanhope replied that he believed Wolseley's opinions essential to the Promotion Board not only because Stanhope himself generally held a high regard for Wolseley's opinions on many issues, but also because Wolseley had campaigned for so long for improvement in the promotion process that it was inconceivable to omit him as a member of such a Board.[52]

The workings of the Promotion Board satisfied few people. There was still a great deal of evidence that the Duke of Cambridge's selections were approved without serious consideration of alternative candidates. Isolated in Ireland, Wolseley could do little to counteract the Duke's influence. He urged Campbell-Bannerman to pay more attention to the recommendations of the Board. For example in 1894 the Board recommended that the next colonels of artillery should be Alleyne and Maurice but Wolseley had heard privately that the Duke had said that he did 'not care a D--- for the Promotion Board and that Colonel Hamers shall certainly be promoted'. A year later another crisis arose which demonstrated Wolseley's influence; his friend Wood was appointed to the Shorncliffe command after the Promotion Board had recommended Colonel Carrington for the post. Buller was so outraged that he actually threatened to resign as Adjutant General over the matter.[53] The failings of the Promotion Board to ensure the promotion of those officers it had recommended for advancement demonstrated the strength of personal preference over impartial analysis of the ability of any given applicant for promotion. A later chapter will show that

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50 Wolseley to Richard Wolseley, 17 Nov. 1886, WPP 163/v; Wolseley to Campbell-Bannerman, 1893, in Life of Wolseley, p264

51 R. Thompson to Campbell-Bannerman, BM 41230

52 Stanhope to Cambridge, 30 June 1890, RA E/1/12619

53 Wolseley to Campbell-Bannerman, 9 Feb. 1894, BM 41233; Thompson to Campbell-Bannerman, 1 Jan. 1895, BM 41230

Wolseley was at least as good as the Duke of Cambridge in abusing his power as Commander-in-Chief to secure the promotion of his allies.

Wolseley had another weapon in his arsenal for the battle to achieve selection in the army: the cost of the General Officers' List. The government was willing to give Wolseley support in this area. In 1880 Childers was prepared to reduce the General Officers' List from 385 to between 140 and 160 generals. In 1886 Wolseley congratulated W.H. Smith on his willingness to reduce the number of majors and lieutenant-colonels on the regimental establishment confident that this would pave the way for selection. In August 1887 in a memorandum on army expenditure Wolseley called for a further culling of the General Officers' List to 63, which was the number employed at the time, with a reserve of seven generals in case of ill health or incompetence.[54] Stanhope responded favourably to Wolseley's ideas and outlined the advantages of the scheme for the Queen:

> Selection will be introduced, not in the difficult form of choosing individuals out of a large number for merit, but in the simpler form of asking when a Major-General's command becomes vacant, who is the best qualified to fill it?... The result of this scheme will be that all general officers will have been selected on the ground of their fitness to hold a General Officer's appointment, which has not hitherto been the case, and the General Officers' list will contain a number of men specially qualified for employment in time of emergency.

The number of general officers was reduced to 100 and the scheme came into effect on 31 December 1890.[55] It was a victory for Wolseley: although he had failed to introduce selection into the lower ranks of the army, he had won the support of the government for his opinions on the higher officers on the ground of cost. These 100 staff officers were intended to be the picked men of the army; their performance in the Boer War will be discussed in a later chapter.

One vital function of the War Office was to prepare the army for war and it was in this area that Britain lagged behind the armies on the continent. Dilke stated that 'the fundamental

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54 Wolseley to Smith, 24 March 1886, WO110/8; Wolseley memo. on army expenditure, 20 Aug. 1887, WO33/48

55 Wolseley to Stanhope, Stanhope Papers, 0314; Stanhope to Queen, 25 June 1889, 0250/3; Stanhope memo. for the Cabinet, 27 June 1889, CAB37/25; Wolseley was determined to cut the number of staff officers for another reason: cost. He wrote to the Duke on 30 August 1887 that the War Office was under extreme pressure to reduce expenditure, and that it was essential to cut down on 'all superfluous staff officers, so that we may have more to spend upon the realities of the army'. i.e. men and horses. RA E/1/11865

requirement is, of course, that the necessities of war shall be aimed at, and that the system shall involve a minimum of change in the passage from peace to war'.[56] The fruition of this requirement was fraught with difficulties: there was the fundamental problem caused by the organisation of the army itself with units spread across the Empire; there was the unwillingness of the government to provide the funds for training on a scale sufficient to test the abilities of the staff officers, or to spend on the requisites of war; and, there was the lack of a body of men within the British Army to oversee all the preparations for war, corresponding to the Chief of the Staff's Department in other countries, particularly Germany.

When he became Adjutant General Wolseley inherited the 1875 mobilisation plan. This scheme had envisaged the distribution of all military units in Britain into eight Army Corps.[57] It was never seen as a practicable document since there were not enough men to form these corps and was ignored during the mobilisation for the Egyptian campaign. Largely because of his concern over home defence, Wolseley set a team to work on a new and feasible mobilisation scheme. Brackenbury began the work in 1886, and his work was completed with a series of memoranda by Ardagh in 1888. These laid down the framework of two Army Corps and a cavalry brigade which could be sent abroad on offensive operations on which all the details could be worked out. One deficit which quickly became apparent was the lack of horses for the second Army Corps. This situation was improved by the scheme for the registration of horses set up under the provisions of the National Defence Act of 1888. Wolseley also set about improving the Intelligence Department by sending Brackenbury there and pressing for more men and money to be allocated to it.[58]

One detail Wolseley devoted much attention to was the question of transport for the army in the field. His experiences in the Crimea where the Commissariat Department had been totally inadequate in its provision of supplies to the army at the front convinced him that decentralisation to the level of regimental transport was the solution to the problem. The government looked

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56 S. Wilkinson & C. Dilke, Imperial Defence, (London 1892) p201
57 Mobilisation scheme, 25 Jan. & 18 Nov. 1875, WO33/27
58 Memo on the mobilisation of one Army Corps, Brackenbury, 29 Sept. & 14 Oct. 1886, WOP W19; memo on the defence of England, Ardagh, 17 April 1888, WOP W18 & 6 July 1888, WOP W19

askance at Wolseley's proposals; it was intent on building up the Army Service Corps as the central transport body of the army in the field, and balked at the cost of maintaining regimental transport in peace. Wolseley argued that contrary to popular belief European armies also kept up regimental transport in time of peace, even Germany. He found an ally in the Duke of Cambridge and used his name freely in his correspondence with Hartington, for example, 'I know H.R.H. is most anxious to train a large number of officers and men in Transport duties, but he considers this can be done most advantageously in Regts and he objects very strongly to handing them over for instruction to the Commissariat'. Wolseley accepted that maintaining a central transport body such as the Army Service Corps was the cheapest solution but reminded Hartington of the success of regimental transport during recent campaigns 'whilst I have never seen one Commt. Transport succeed, and have seen it break down upon many occasions'.[59]

Decentralisation of supplies was of major importance to Wolseley. He backed Stanhope's attempts to reform the system. As has already been noted above Wolseley was no friend of Woolwich and therefore noted with approval Stanhope's proposal to build 62 new storehouses which would move two-thirds of the stores away from Woolwich. The decentralisation of stores was vital to the mobilisation plan; in case of invasion the possible destruction of Woolwich would not spell complete disaster, and the siting of the stores for the Aldershot Division between Aldershot and Southampton would speed the process of despatching the first Army Corps abroad when mobilisation was ordered. The decentralisation process was very slow. In 1897 Methuen mobilised the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division at short notice. The force had still to rely on Woolwich for stores and equipment and Methuen was appalled to be told by Woolwich in response to the mobilisation telegram that the depot would be closed for the next four days.[60]

The mobilisation plan detailed what units would be allocated to each brigade within either Army Corps and it stipulated the staff requirements for these units. However, knowing how many staff officers of each grade were required was only the first step towards building a staff prepared for war. It was apparent that the appointment to command a division, even one of the importance

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59 Wolseley to Hartington, 16 Aug. 1884, WPP PLB/1
60 Haliburton, p83-4; Bond, Staff College, p174

of the Aldershot division, was not a statement that the commander would retain his position on the outbreak of war. For example, the Queen approved the appointment of Wood over her son the Duke of Connaught to Aldershot in 1888 only on the understanding that 'she was not pledged to approving his selection for the command of the first expedition that may be sent abroad'.[61] Wolseley was adamant that officers appointed to positions of command should retain that command in time of war. This was why he pressed so hard for selection. He believed it pointless to raise the hopes of any officer by giving him a command above his abilities and then either dash them by sacking him when war broke out or entrust the lives of men to his inept command. Had Wolseley succeeded in getting his proposals adopted and had the government allocated the funds for field training on a large scale 'it seems reasonable to suggest that... Sir Redvers Buller would have been eliminated from the list of potential commanders-in-chief while, on the other hand, the Duke of Connaught would not have commanded in manoeuvres unless he was to be allowed to command in war'.[62]

In the late 1880s the debates over Britain's ability to repel invasion led the Government to question the whole framework within which decisions on military and naval planning were made. The result was the establishment of the Royal Commission under the former Secretary of State for War, Lord Hartington. This Commission which commonly bears Hartington's name focused attention on the viability and desirability of introducing the German model of the Chief of the Staff's Department into the War Office. In his evidence to the Commission Wolseley began by stating that Britain needed such a department

> more than any nation abroad for many reasons, particularly on account of the peculiar constitution of our army, and the fact of its being scattered all over the world, and of the numerous responsibilities which devolve upon it, and consequently the numerous phases of war for which it should be always prepared.[63]

The sheer volume of work created by the need to prepare the intelligence and the plans of war for the many possible enemies or combination of enemies Britain could face made a Chief of the Staff necessary.

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61 Ponsonby to Stanhope, 30 Nov. 1888 in Buckle, Vol. 1, 3rd series, p455
62 Bond, Staff College, p176
63 Wolseley's evidence to the Hartington Commission, Q.197

On the subject of how to establish such a department Wolseley was prepared to provide details. The functions of the Chief of Staff would correspond closely to the existing functions of the Adjutant General excepting those concerned with the discipline of the army. This would free the Chief of Staff to be 'the recognised adviser of the Commander-in-Chief, and one of the advisers of the Secretary of State, his great function would be the preparation of the army for war'. In order to achieve this he would also assume the function of training the army, at present within the province of the Commander-in-Chief.[64] Wolseley's description of the position and functions of the Chief of Staff happened to coincide with the position he himself would like to occupy. By removing authority over the discipline of the army from his department Wolseley would rid himself of a great mass of petty administrative work, leaving him free to concentrate on the areas of military affairs of most interest to him. By removing the supervision of training from the Duke of Cambridge, he would be in a position to institute a more modern and relevant system of training for war within the British Army.

The Commission recommended the establishment of a department of the Chief of Staff which would include the intelligence division and mobilisation division presently under the aegis of the Adjutant General. The Chief of Staff would directly advise the Secretary of State on all matters of general military policy including the strength, distribution and mobilisation of the army. The department would collect military information, prepare defence schemes for the Empire, prepare plans for war, liaise with the Admiralty and generals in command in foreign stations, and report annually to the Secretary of State on the military requirements of the Empire. The post of Commander-in-Chief would be abolished. Campbell-Bannerman wrote a long dissent to the report arguing against the creation of a Chief of Staff on the grounds that it was 'likely to reintroduce, perhaps in a worse form, some of the very evils which the organisation of a Council of general Officers would be designed to remove'. He wrote to Hartington that 'what I fear is that your new Chief of Staff will be virtually a new Pope; and therefore I am against him'.[65] The Cabinet ruled against the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief while accepting the desirability of a Chief

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64 Ibid. Q202, 205

65 Report of the Hartington Commission, para. 71-72 and the dissent by Campbell-Bannerman; Campbell-Bannerman to Hartington, 12 Jan. 1890, Devonshire Papers 340.2225

of Staff. At first Wolseley was in favour of the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief. He wanted the Chief of Staff to be even more powerful than the Commission envisaged; the Chief of Staff 'should in fact be the Secretary of State's Military Critic as the Financial Secretary is his financial critic'. Given that the Cabinet refused to abolish the post of Commander-in-Chief Wolseley changed his mind. Indeed he went further and denied he was ever in favour of the abolition of the post telling Ponsonby

> The Duke will not accept the position of Chief of the Staff. Indeed, after being so long Commander-in-Chief it would be impossible for him to do so. I still hope the office of Commander-in-Chief may not be done away with. You know I am not one who would oppose any reform that means progress or the adoption of new ideas. But this proposal is to go a step backward. We sorely want a doctor, I admit, but Brackenbury and Co. have sent us an executioner.[66]

Wolseley's alarm was caused by the Hartington Commission's recommendation for the establishment of a new Army Board on which all members would have equal access to the Secretary of State. He believed that this system would be unworkable in practice and would remove all authority from the head of the army whether he was to be termed Commander-in-Chief or Chief of the Staff.

The debate assumed some urgency towards the end of 1890 because Wolseley's term of office as Adjutant General, already extended once, was about to end. Therefore it was necessary to decide whether the new Adjutant General should retain the same title or whether Wolseley's proposal, made to the Hartington Commission, that the Adjutant General should be the Chief of Staff should be adopted. In April Stanhope had told the Duke of Cambridge that the Cabinet had decided that the post of Adjutant General should be filled up without 'the intervention of a Chief of the Staff in any form', in other words an additional post was not to be created. The Duke replied that he accepted that the Chief of Staff should not be separate from the Adjutant General but suggested that the new officer should be termed 'Chief of the Staff and Adjutant General' and should exercise the Chief of Staff's duties to the Commander-in-Chief. Stanhope responded that the Cabinet would not agree to this proposal.[67] In September Buller wrote to the Duke that he had

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66 Wolseley memo. on the Hartington Commission, 31 March 1890, Stanhope Papers, 0231/1; Wolseley to Ponsonby, 10 April 1890 quoted in Buckle, et al Vol. 1, 3rd series, pp584-5

67 Stanhope to Cambridge, 28 April 1890, Stanhope Papers, 0254/3

been gazetted as 'Adjutant General to the Forces', the old title, whereas he had thought that he would be gazetted 'Adjutant General and Chief Staff Officer of the Forces', the title which he preferred.[68] He failed to get his title changed and the position of Chief of the Staff was not created permanently in peace in the British Army before the outbreak of the Boer War. Nor did the Adjutant General assume the role of Chief of Staff as envisioned by Wolseley: the Commander-in-Chief retained control over training until the post was abolished, and mobilisation planning and intelligence remained among the many duties of the Adjutant General.

Wolseley's contribution to the drive towards the creation of a modern army while Adjutant General is hard to assess. Certainly Wolseley's proposals did nothing to hamper such a movement and indeed did much to accelerate the pace of change. It is probably fair to say that during the 1880s Wolseley frequently struggled to get his views accepted against the often strident opposition of the Duke of Cambridge and the financial parsimony of successive governments. A later chapter will examine the extent to which Wolseley sought to further the modernisation of the army when he was Commander-in-Chief and free of the opposition of the Duke.

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68 Buller to Cambridge, 20 Sept. 1890 in Verner p359

Chapter 6 - Imperial Defence

During the second half of the nineteenth century the British Empire expanded greatly to assume responsibility for a wide extent of territories in Africa and Asia. Britain was principally a maritime nation whose policy could be defined broadly as the maintenance of the freedom of the seas for commerce by the Royal Navy, with its most important strategic coaling stations and bases defended by the British Army. The principal route to be guarded was to India, Britain's greatest colony, and much of the expansion of the late nineteenth century was directed to securing this route. This broad policy was generally accepted and not open to dispute, but opinions differed on the best means of securing the integrity of the Empire.[1] Wolseley held strong opinions on the subject of imperial defence which often differed from those of the politicians. These opinions will be examined in this chapter.

Wolseley neither denied the premise that the navy bore the main burden for imperial defence, nor that the army had to accept a subordinate role in this responsibility, other than defending India against Russian aggression.[2] What Wolseley did challenge was the political approach towards imperial expansion: he believed that insufficient thought was given to the burdens placed on the army by the requirement to defend the land bases on the route to India, and India itself. He wanted a clearer definition to be made of the priorities of imperial defence to identify the main strategic points. Wolseley believed that without such a statement the Empire would continue to expand piecemeal without any clear sense of purpose. He saw the occupation of Egypt as an example of acceptance of additional responsibilities without prior thought on their necessity. Furthermore, governments ignored the effect their actions had on the ability of the army

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[1] There is no shortage of books on the subject of imperial policy. Contemporary works include G.S. Clarke, Imperial Defence, (London 1898); C. Dilke, Problems of Greater Britain, (London 1890); C. Dilke, The Present Position of European Politics, (London 1887); F. Maurice, The Balance of Military Power in Europe, (Edinburgh, 1888); S. Wilkinson, The Great Alternative, (London 1894); Wilkinson & Dilke, Imperial Defence. More recent works include K. Bourne, The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, (Oxford 1970); J. Gooch, The Prospect of War, (London 1981); James, Rise and Fall; T. Pakenham, The Scramble for Africa, (London 1991); B. Porter, The Lion's Share, (London 1984); R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, (London 1961). There are of course also many works on naval policy.

[2] Canada was the other colony that could only be defended by the army. After 1870 Canada was not viewed as vulnerable to invasion.

to carry out its plans. Wolseley defined the problem as follows:

> We have cut our army coat in accordance with the amount of money which we have fixed arbitrarily as to what its cost should be, in utter disregard of the size of our body, the proportions of our limbs, or the objects for which any coat at all is required.[3]

Wolseley believed the solution would be 'a clear statement of our military requirements... laid before the people, through Parliament' so that the minimum number of soldiers needed to be maintained could be established and that once this was done 'no future Ministry will ever dare to leave us without it'.[4] Wolseley's efforts to secure a definition of imperial policy with regard to the army will be examined in this chapter.

Wolseley's opinions on the subject of imperial policy will be approached in the following way. The chapter will begin with an analysis of the Eastern Crisis, when Wolseley made his first statements on strategic policy, and will then turn to examine Wolseley's opinions on each region of interest to imperial defence during the period: South Africa, Egypt and the Sudan, and India. Wolseley identified a number of weaknesses in imperial policy and these, and his proposed solutions, will be analysed. The chapter will end with Wolseley's efforts to force a statement from the government of the main purposes for which the army existed, and will examine Wolseley's role in the preparation of the 1888 Stanhope Memorandum and his comments on it.

Before turning to Wolseley's opinions on the subject of imperial defence it is necessary to say a little about how strategic policy was made. In this area the politicians held the upper hand: the Cabinet decided the direction of foreign policy and, as will be seen, often even withheld the facts from Parliament. The military authorities played no defined role: they were expected to find the men required to put the government's policy into effect, they were sometimes invited to give their opinions on the best means to be used, but had little influence over whether such a policy was desirable. No committee existed in which political, military, and naval authorities could meet with equal standing to discuss policy. The military authorities had to be content with the production of memoranda for their political masters in the hope that attention would be paid to their opinions. This state of affairs led to serious problems during the period, but it was not until the Second Boer

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[3] Memo. by Wolseley, 20 Oct. 1883, WO32/6705
[4] Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements'

War that the consequences of the lack of civil-military consultation and co-operation became fully evident. The events of 1899 will be discussed in a later chapter.

Wolseley's first contact with the making of policy came in 1876 when he was seconded to the India Office at the height of the Bulgarian crisis. In 1875 Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria had revolted against Turkish rule. The revolt was crushed with great brutality, and in 1876 Gladstone began a public campaign to draw attention to the atrocities being committed by the Turks in Bulgaria. Russia pledged her support for her fellow Slavs and there was the very real danger of a major war breaking out between Russia and Turkey. This would then threaten British strategic interests in the Mediterranean if, as seemed likely, Russia should reach Constantinople and open the Dardanelles to Russian warships. As Brackenbury expressed it in 1886, 'To acquire Constantinople is the traditional policy of Russia. To keep her out of it is the traditional policy of England'.[5] Britain needed to keep the Suez Canal open for her commerce with the East, therefore it seemed likely that Britain would be dragged into the war.

Wolseley's initial response to the crisis revealed much about the narrowness of his political outlook, and represents an almost diametrically opposite view of the question of war with Russia to what he would express later in his career. Almost immediately on arrival at the India Office Wolseley produced his first memorandum on the Eastern Crisis. In it he accepted the long-held political and military view that 'with the Russians in occupation of the Hellespont... how impossible it will be for us, if at war with Russia, to maintain our long lines of communication with India, via Egypt, no matter how strong our fleets may be'. He went on to urge the adoption of a defensive policy in European Turkey and a vigorous offensive in Asia.[6] It was here that Wolseley's political naivety showed itself: Britain had no naval base in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Turkey's closure of the Bosphorus to Russian warships was the only means Britain had of maintaining the freedom of the Suez Canal for British commerce to India and Australasia.

Wolseley, however, proposed to abandon Turkey to her own devices while Britain, in alliance with Afghanistan, would conduct a campaign against the Russian provinces of Tashkent and

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[5] A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918, (Oxford, 1971), pp 228-255; General Sketch of the situation abroad and at home from a military standpoint, Brackenbury, 3 Aug. 1886, WOP W18

[6] Memo. by Wolseley, 10. Nov. 1876, WOP W34

Samarkand. The memorandum was clearly unacceptable to Wolseley's political superiors. Sir Ralph Thompson wrote to Wolseley that, although Lord Beaconsfield had read the memorandum he did not want it circulated to the Cabinet and 'thinks it should be kept as quiet as possible'.[7]

Although this memorandum showed some political naivety, it did demonstrate that Wolseley had a clear idea of what was militarily achievable. He held no great opinion on the fighting qualities of the Turkish Army and, like many other commentators and observers, was to be pleasantly surprised by the vigorous defence Turkey made at Plevna during the war. Wolseley recognised that in 1876 Russia's southern provinces were vulnerable to attack since they were relatively recent conquests and the construction of strategic railways connecting them with the rest of Russia was in the early stages. He suggested that the Crimean War had set Russia back 50 years and was convinced that a war in Asia at this point would 'put her back 100 years in her struggle for sovereign rule over the whole of Asia'.[8] Wolseley hoped that by demonstrating British power in Asia Russia would pose less of a threat to India in the future. The theme of war now while the enemy is weak was one to which Wolseley would return when considering the aftermath of the First Boer War and operations in the Sudan after the fall of Khartoum.

In April 1877 the Russo-Turkish war broke out. Wolseley was not a member of the Confidential Mobilisation Committee and, as Adrian Preston has pointed out, did not play a major role in determining the British response.[9] This was not for lack of trying. In a new memorandum on the subject Wolseley now accepted the need to provide support directly for Turkey and advocated the stationing of some British troops to help the Turks defend the Bulair lines on the Gallipoli peninsula.[10] This was in direct contradiction to Wolseley's usual view of the role of the army: at this time and in the future Wolseley would be opposed to the stationing of small bodies of British troops abroad for an indefinite period. However, on this occasion he advocated supporting Turkey on Gallipoli because he predicted, as did all the other military authorities, that the Russians would advance much faster than they in fact did, and that a British expedition to the Balkans would

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7 Thompson to Wolseley, 30 Nov. 1876, WPP
8 Memo. by Wolseley, 7 May 1877, WOP, W34
9 Preston, 1879, Introduction
10 Memo. by Wolseley, 7 May 1877, WOP W34

be too late to stop them reaching the outskirts of Constantinople.

The crux of the matter was the question of whether Britain was prepared to despatch only a limited number of troops to boost Turkish defences on Gallipoli, or was ready to engage in a major war with Russia. The Cardwell system made it difficult for Britain to adopt the former policy, since a limited campaign of uncertain duration would strain the resources of the army, whereas the adoption of the latter policy would justify the recall of the Army Reserve and, in theory at least, place less of a strain on the army organisation. The government appeared to have no clearly thought out approach to the subject. In December 1876 the Duke of Cambridge wrote to the Secretary of State, Gathorne Hardy, asking for a policy statement so that military preparations could be started. No such statement was forthcoming and indeed the politicians so misunderstood the military authorities that they thought them obstructive. As Disraeli complained to the Queen:

> It is they who have opposed every military move, that has been suggested from the beginning - Mediterranean garrisons, expeditions to Gallipoli, and so on. What they want, and what they have ever tried to bring about, is a great military expedition, like the Crimean...[11]

The crucial issue was that Britain could not afford to increase her army by recalling the Army Reserve unless war was imminent - it was recalled on 1 April 1878 - but could not undertake occupation of foreign territory for unlimited periods of time without severely disrupting the efficiency of the home army.

Wolseley faced a dilemma: he was known to be ambitious but this caused him problems when arguing for a war with Russia. He wrote to his brother George,

> I do not dare say this openly, for being a soldier, the curs of England would sneer out, oh he wishes for war from personal motives. In my own heart I know this is not the case: I wish it because I love my country before all earthly things, and am prepared... to... giving up my life for her...[12]

At the same time Wolseley feared the consequences of a land war between Russia and Britain because of the vast difference in their military resources. This fear is shown in a memorandum Wolseley produced shortly before his appointment as Chief of Staff under Lord Napier for any

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11 Cambridge to Hardy, 5 Dec. 1876, in Verner, p111; Disraeli to Queen, 22 July 1877, quoted in W.F. Moneypenny & G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, (London, 1920), Vol. VI, p154

12 Wolseley to George Wolseley, in R. Millman, Britain and the Eastern Question 1875-78, (Oxford 1979) p383-4;

British expedition to the Near East. Wolseley's proposed solution was to bring about a grandiose scheme of alliances. In this case the projected alliance was even less realistic than acquiring the Amir's support for a campaign against Russia in Asia. He now proposed a grand Muslim alliance of contingents from all the North African states along with the Turks and Albanians to fight alongside half a million British and Canadian volunteers.[13] Wolseley would never have achieved this alliance: Britain knew little about the people of North Africa, and apart from holding a financial stake in Egypt, had no interests in the region. The only common bond between the Arabs of North Africa and Turkey was religion. However, Wolseley might have been able to raise half a million men from Britain and Canada: the word 'Jingoism' entered the vocabulary to describe the upsurge of patriotic feeling, spurred on in the music halls, at the prospect of a war with Russia.

The Eastern Crisis was brought to an end by the Congress of Berlin in July 1878. Britain's freedom of action had been restricted by her lack of a naval base in the Eastern Mediterranean. While the crisis had been in progress the question of a suitable site had been explored. In his memorandum of November 1876 Wolseley recommended the acquisition of Crete from Turkey. Crete had several good harbours but, as Lintorn Simmons pointed out in his memorandum in April 1877, these would be difficult to defend. Simmons added that Cyprus and Rhodes were both unsuitable as coaling stations because of the small size of their main harbours. Therefore he recommended the acquisition of the small island of Scarpanto,[14] which lay between Crete and Rhodes. It was 350 miles from Port Said and 600 miles from Malta and had a small land-locked harbour which would be easy to defend. His recommendations were ignored. In his journal Wolseley noted that in meetings with Lord Beaconsfield Cyprus had often been mentioned but only as a reserve proposal to the principal aim of acquiring a base on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, preferably Alexandretta or on the Gulf of Iskanderoon.[15]

Wolseley was therefore somewhat surprised to be informed that Turkey had offered Cyprus to Britain at the Congress of Berlin, and that he was to be its first British High

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13 Memo. by Wolseley, 30 March 1878, WOP W17

14 Modern name Kárpathos.

15 Memo. by Wolseley, 10 Nov. 1876, WOP W34; Memo. on coaling stations at the east of the Mediterranean, Lintorn Simmons, 27 April 1877, WO33/31; Journal, 19 July 1878, WO147/6

Commissioner. It appears that the government had ignored military and naval advice and assumed responsibility for an island noted only for its unhealthy climate. The only harbour of any size was at Famagusta, and Wolseley learnt that he was expected to turn this into a great coaling station. In fact the government knew the limitations of Cyprus but accepted the Turks' offer as being better than nothing: the Under-Secretary for the Colonies A.F. Egerton was forced to admit to Parliament that 'technically speaking, there is no harbour; but there were three very fair anchorages'.[16] Wolseley's journal of the period records the extent of his disgust with government policy and his determination to convince the politicians that Britain had been given a useless prize for her earlier support of Turkey. Wolseley succeeded in doing this in November 1878 when the Secretary of State for War Colonel Stanley and the First Lord of the Admiralty W.H. Smith visited Cyprus. Nevertheless Wolseley argued that Cyprus was worth retaining, solely as a place from which to obtain transport animals for expeditions in the region.[17] This prediction was proved correct when in 1882 transport animals were purchased in Cyprus for the war in Egypt.

Wolseley was briefly recalled to London from Cyprus before being sent to South Africa to restore British supremacy after the Zulus had defeated Lord Chelmsford's force at Isandhlwana. Wolseley had strong views on the importance of South Africa for imperial defence. He was also fortunate in his dealings with the region, serving there only when the issues were clear-cut, such as in 1875 when as High Commissioner he imposed a new constitution on Natal; and in 1879 when the Zulus had already been defeated at Ulundi. Therefore Wolseley was absent when issues were less straightforward and reputations damaged such as those of Sir Bartle Frere, Chelmsford, George Colley, Butler and Buller. Nevertheless Wolseley's reputation cannot escape completely untarnished because he did make a number of policy decisions and recommendations which complicated matters in the future.

The 1879 Carnarvon Commission underlined the importance of South Africa in imperial defence: 'the Cape route... assumes a far higher degree of importance to the Empire at large, being essential to the retention by Great Britain of her possessions in India, Mauritius, Ceylon,

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16 A.F. Egerton to House of Commons, 11 July 1878, Hansard, Third Series, Vol. CCXLI
17 Journal, 19 July 1878, WO147/6

Singapore, China, and even Australasia'.[18] Wolseley agreed totally with this statement and would later argue against government policy on Egypt on this basis. Nevertheless Wolseley's settlement of Zululand after the war there actually damaged British supremacy in South Africa. His division of Zululand into 13 weak provinces has been described by De Kiewiet as an 'act of scuttle'. Wolseley himself wrote of the settlement that 'it is based on expediency because no statesman unbiased by the colonial avarice for more land must feel how important it is to refrain from adding to the already serious and heavy responsibilities of the Empire in South Africa'.[19] This was undoubtedly true: one feature of Wolseley's pronouncements on imperial policy was his desire to restrict the size of the British forces needed to defend each area. But what Wolseley and the government failed to realise in 1879 was that the division of Zululand fundamentally altered the balance of power in South Africa.

While Wolseley was in South Africa he reported that the Boers were agitating against the federation created in 1877. Wolseley largely dismissed the strength of the Boer opposition to federation, and compounded his mistake by deriding the military strength of the Boers. His opinion was that the Boers were 'in some respects inferior to the Zulus' and were cowards who 'go on playing at soldiers and blustering, knowing in their hearts they would bolt at the sight of the first troop of Dragoons they saw'.[20] This sense of complacency was shared by Colley, who succeeded Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, and faced the outbreak of the Boer War with the same British military establishment in South Africa as Wolseley had recommended at the end of the Zulu War.

Even though Wolseley was scathing about the character of the Boers he recognised the importance of the land they lived on. In an important despatch of 13 November 1880 Wolseley outlined for the Colonial Secretary Hicks Beach the value of the Transvaal and urged the government to arrive at 'a definite line of action and policy'. He described the Transvaal as 'rich

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[18] In 1878 £91 million of trade went to or around the Cape compared with £65 million passing through the Suez Canal. Robinson & Gallagher, p59-60

[19] Quoted in E. Unterhalter, 'Confronting Imperialism' in A. Duminy & C. Ballard, (eds.) The Anglo-Zulu War, (Pietermaritzburg, 1981) p106; C.W. De Kiewiet, The Imperial Factor in South Africa, (Cambridge, 1937), p247

[20] Journal, 13 Oct. 1879 & 7 Jan. 1880, WO147/7

in minerals with gold fields still being discovered;... Any such discovery would soon bring a large British population here. The time must eventually arrive when the Boers will be in a small minority...'. Therefore until the British commercial presence in the Transvaal grew to a size which might assure British supremacy in South Africa, Britain would have to maintain a small military presence, of about 2,000 to 3,000 troops, to discourage Boer appeals for independence.[21] These appeals led to war in December 1880 when the Boers rose in revolt and invaded Natal. Whereas Wolseley might have hoped for the adoption of a definite policy from the Conservative government geared towards preserving Britain's position in South Africa, he could expect exactly the opposite from the incoming Liberal government whose election pledges, voiced by Gladstone during his Midlothian campaign, included granting self-government to the Boers. Consequently the Liberal policy was one whereby the military fought to remove the Boers from Natal, culminating in the defeat and death of Colley on Majuba Hill in February 1881, whilst secretly negotiating for peace through President Brand of the Orange Free State.[22]

Wolseley was never directly consulted on South African policy at this point. The government ordered the despatch of reinforcements and appointed Roberts, who was in England at the time, to command them. However, government policy prevailed over military requirements and Evelyn Wood, in command after Colley's death, was ordered to make what Wolseley would forever afterwards describe as an 'ignominious peace'. The Queen also thought that the government had given in to the Boers though she later defended Wood's conduct against Wolseley's accusations.[23] Wolseley returned to the subject when preparing his autobiography when he wrote:

> I feel sure, we should never have relinquished our hold over the Transvaal. If we were to have a fight upon the question, how much better it would have been to have had it when the Boers possessed no artillery, were only armed with bad sporting rifles, had very little ammunition and still less money than in 1899...[24]

Wolseley's argument was that the 1881 settlement had allowed the Boers to remain a strong force

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21 Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 13 Nov. 1879, CAB37/1

22 See J. Lehmann, The First Boer War, (London 1985) for details of the war.

23 Ponsonby to Kimberley, 12 March 1881 quoted in Buckle, Vol. 3, 2nd Series, p202; Wolseley to Lady Wolseley 15 Jan. 1885, WPP W/P

24 Notes for unpublished autobiography, WPP SSL8

capable of challenging British supremacy in South Africa at any time of their choosing. He was correct: to strengthen Britain's position the pre-war establishment of four battalions was raised to 12 infantry battalions and four cavalry regiments. Boer threats of territorial expansion forced Britain to restore Cetewayo to the Zulu throne in 1883, and involved the establishment of a group of British interests encircling Boer territories for example in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia. In 1884 the War Office reiterated its belief in the importance of the Cape when urging the government to maintain British supremacy by political and commercial means because it was 'impossible, for political reasons, to create a Gibraltar out of the Cape Town peninsula'.[25]

Wolseley's belief in the strategic value of South Africa coloured his attitude towards British intervention in Egyptian affairs. Britain held a strong financial interest in Egypt along with other major European nations, particularly France, and held the majority of shares in the Suez Canal Company. Therefore when Arabi raised a revolt against the authority of the Khedive of Egypt the British government was forced to take action to save her commercial interests. It appears that the government knew that some action needed to be taken, but was indecisive as to what should be done, and the extent to which the French and Turkish governments should be involved. Perhaps because of its vacillating attitude the government left Parliament in the dark over the policy it was pursuing. On 12 July 1882 Sir Wilfred Lawson described the position: 'The system has been to ask some Question of a Minister, who declined to give an answer; and then, next day, to ask another Question of some other Minister, who again referred to the Minister who had before refused to answer'.[26]

Wolseley accepted that Britain had to protect her financial interest and that the freedom of the Suez Canal needed safeguarding, but he nevertheless was opposed to British military intervention in the area. For example Sir Wilfred Blunt recorded a conversation he had with Wolseley in the early summer of 1882:

> He volunteered the information that he had been consulted two or three times during the winter with a view to immediate occupation. He assured me, however, that nobody would intervene, that the occupation of Egypt would be most

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25 For example, in 1883 the Boers set up two settlements in Bechuanaland which led to the despatch of the Bechuanaland Field Force under Warren to expel them in 1884. Robinson & Gallagher, p203; B. Porter, p98

26 Sir Wilfred Lawson to House of Commons, 12 July 1882, Hansard, Vol. CCLXXIV

> unpopular with the army, and that he himself should be very sorry to have to go there.[27]

It is therefore somewhat ironic that Wolseley's finest hour as a commander should have come when he led the British forces against Arabi in the summer of 1882. From the military point of view the problem of crushing the revolt presented no insurmountable difficulties and was, like many colonial campaigns, one principally of logistical challenges: in this case how to get a large body of men from Ismailia to Tel-el-Kebir and then Cairo through the hot August sun. Wolseley surpassed himself in command of this force, which swiftly defeated the Egyptians with few British losses.[28]

Robinson and Gallagher have argued in their book on Victorian policy that 'the security of the routes to the East was one interest with which British cabinets could not afford to gamble. It was the *sine qua non* of the British movement into Egypt'.[29] Wolseley would have disagreed with this assessment: he regarded the Cape route as the only one open to Britain in time of war, and thought that the occupation of Egypt was undertaken from commercial and financial interest and not for imperial defence. He believed that a strong base on Cyprus would be adequate to guard the entrance to the Suez Canal without Britain maintaining a garrison in Egypt. Wolseley made his opinions clearly known: as early as January 1883 when consulted over the size of the garrison to remain in Egypt, Wolseley made a recommendation but added that he would prefer total withdrawal.[30] Later he told Hartington in March 1885 that 'Your whole policy from first to last in Egypt has been to my mind entirely wrong', and informed Hartington's successor W.H. Smith in June 1885 'I long to see us out of Egypt and would rejoice indeed the day I saw the last red coat embark to leave the country. Our interest in the country owing to the Suez Canal is very much over estimated'.[31]

Wolseley was not alone in regarding the occupation of Egypt as unnecessary to the

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[27] W.S. Blunt, Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt, (London 1907) p227

[28] For details of the campaign see F. Maurice, The Military History of the Campaign of 1882 in Egypt, (London 1887); and for a critical examination of the campaign see Bond, 'Mr. Gladstone's Invasion of Egypt 1882'

[29] Robinson & Gallagher, p159

[30] Granville to Gladstone, 9 Jan. 1883 Gladstone Papers, BM 44175

[31] Wolseley to Hartington, 4 Jan. 1883, 20 Feb. 1883, 27 Sept. 1884, & 9 March 1885, all in Devonshire Papers, 340.1307, 1334, 1535a, 1677; Wolseley to Smith, 29 June 1885, Smith Papers, WO110/3

requirements of imperial defence. Sir Randolph Churchill made a speech at Edinburgh on 18 December 1883 in which he told his audience 'You will be told that Egypt is the high-road to India, and that Britain must hold it at all costs. This is a terrible and a widespread delusion... The Suez Canal is a commercial route to India, and a good route, too, in time of peace; but it never was, and never could be, a military route for Britain in time of war'. The former Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer William Harcourt agreed with Churchill. The British Consul in Egypt, Evelyn Baring, also agreed with Wolseley: 'In the event of war, the presence of a British garrison in Egypt would probably be a source of weakness rather than of strength'.[32]

Wolseley understood that British troops would have to remain in Egypt until the country had been put on a secure financial footing and had built up an army to replace the one he had defeated. As he wrote to his wife on the day after the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, 'The Khedive will have to organise some new military force, for at present he has... none, and his only authority rests on our bayonets'. This was echoed by Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords.[33] The problem was more serious than even Wolseley realised at the time; the length of the revolt and the previous corruption of the Khedive's government meant that Egypt had no true ruling class or institutions of government. Therefore the crux of the problem was how to bring about reform and how to withdraw the bulk of the British forces. As Evelyn Baring put it, 'it was not sufficiently understood that the adoption of one of these policies was wholly destructive of the other'.[34] Wolseley deplored the consequences of the occupation of Egypt; the retention of a garrison there would place a further strain on the organisation of the British Army, it would adversely affect Britain's relations with France, and might lead to British involvement in the internal affairs of Egypt's satellite the Sudan.

Before leaving Egypt Wolseley recommended that a garrison of 5,000 men would be adequate to guard Egypt. Both the Duke of Cambridge and the Queen opposed this reduction of British strength but in the event Wolseley's views prevailed since he was the man on the spot.

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[32] Quoted in W.S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill, (London 1906) Vol. 1. p280; Hamilton Diary, 1 Jan. 1888, Vol. 2, p70; Lord Cromer, Modern Egypt, (London 1908) p329

[33] Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 14 Sept. 1882, WPP W/P; Salisbury to the House of Lords, 26 October 1882, Hansard, Vol. CCLXXIV

[34] Cromer, p333

Wolseley feared the strain the occupation of Egypt would place on the organisation of the army. In December 1884 while he was campaigning in the Sudan Wolseley heard the rumour that the British proposals to the conference of the powers on Egypt included a recommendation that British troops should remain in occupation of Egypt for an extended period. He recorded his opinion in his journal:

> I shall be curious to hear whether any increase to our Army Establishments will be made in consequence. It would be to exceed the limit of common sense, if they continue to hold Egypt with an Army establishment that had been fixed at about its present strength before we had a soldier in this country.[35]

The answer came soon: no more men. The problem was that the government was not prepared to state publicly that it would not withdraw from Egypt and to make the corresponding addition to the army establishment. It continued international negotiations to create the financial security and reforms needed in Egypt before British withdrawal, while inserting clauses giving Britain the right of re-entry in the future should the security of the Suez Canal be threatened. Wolseley recognised the political problem but urged the adoption of a more pragmatic outlook:

> If in some ten or more years hence we find ourselves in a position to withdraw from Egypt, it will be easy to adapt the army organisation, which had been framed to meet the greater difficulty, to circumstances that have changed for the good in our favour.

Wolseley had some political support; Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Harcourt on similar lines in February 1886.[36] It can be argued that until the refusal of the Sultan to sign the Drummond Wolff Convention in 1887 there was a chance that Britain would be able to withdraw from Egypt. Once these international negotiations failed withdrawal became impossible and the British Army should have had its establishments raised to compensate for the retention of eleven and a half battalions in Egypt.

Britain was forced to retain a large garrison in Egypt for another reason. France had never forgiven England for advancing into Egypt alone during one of the periodic government crises of

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35 Journal, 22 Dec. 1884, WO147/8

36 Memo. by Wolseley, 12 Nov. 1885, WPP W/MEM/1; Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt, 10 Feb. 1886, in J.A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, (London 1923) p101; On 28 April 1885 Wolseley wrote to the Duke of Cambridge with the suggestion that Wolseley should go to Constantinople to negotiate with the Sultan for Turkish troops to garrison Egypt. He believed the Sultan would pay more attention to the opinions of a military man. RA E/1/11167

the French Third Republic.[37] France proved obstructive during the international conferences on the Egyptian debt and there was some suspicion that France would take advantage of a British withdrawal from Egypt to enter the country herself. Wolseley argued in a letter to W.H. Smith in June 1885 that French displeasure with British policy made the threat of war real. The navy was not strong enough to keep France off the coast of England and Ireland and at the same time keep the Mediterranean open. Egypt could not be retained 'whilst our navy is barely equal to that of France, and when our military establishments are so low that we have the greatest difficulty in finding garrisons even for the foreign possessions already ours...'.[38] Smith was aware of the French threat and told Wolseley not to withdraw his force from Egypt yet because France was bringing back a large number of troops from Tonquin via the Suez Canal and had 150,000 men stationed near Marseilles. The attitude of France continued to affect British policy: in 1887 Wolseley wrote to Stanhope that the British garrison could be safely reduced to 3,000 men but British officers must remain in control of the native army otherwise 'it lays England open to easy defeat by a small force that France could land anywhere on the Delta'.[39]

At the end of 1882 it appeared likely that Britain would be able to avoid taking any responsibility for the Sudan. As Gladstone told the House of Commons in November, 'it is in no part of the duty incumbent upon us to restore order in that Province'.[40] Events proved otherwise: the Mahdi had taken over control over a large area of the southern Sudan in 1881, had called for a holy war and planned to march through Egypt to Mecca. The affairs in the Sudan can be divided into three periods: the first period being from Tel-el-Kebir to the despatch of Gordon to Khartoum in January 1884; the second from then until the despatch of Wolseley's expeditionary force to bring Gordon and the Egyptian garrison away from Khartoum; and the last after the fall of Khartoum. Wolseley was involved in policy-making in all three periods. For the first he acted purely in his professional capacity as Adjutant-General; in the second both as a professional

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37 The Freycinet Government fell on 26 July 1882 when defeated over the vote of credit for an expedition to Egypt.

38 Smith to Wolseley, 5 July 1885, WPP

39 Wolseley to Stanhope, 17 Feb. 1887, WPP PLB1; Wolseley directed Ardagh to examine the defences of the canal with the view to either blockading it if Britain were at war with France, or defending it if at war with Russia. Wolseley to Ardagh, 29 Aug. 1887 PRO30/40/2

40 Gladstone to House of Commons, 2 Nov. 1882, Hansard, Vol. CCLXXIV

adviser to the government, through the Duke of Cambridge and the Secretary of State for War Hartington, and as a personal friend of Gordon; and lastly as a disappointed commander who had failed in his task and needed to restore the situation and to advise on a future policy for the long-term defence of Egypt Proper.

During the first period the problem was to define the frontier of Egypt Proper with regard to its ability to defend itself, and to define the extent to which Egypt should control the Sudan or whether total abandonment was the best course to follow. It is to the credit of Lord Hartington that, unlike so many other Secretaries of State, he actively sought the opinion of his military advisers. It is therefore sad to note that the Cabinet paid little heed to the advice tendered and ignored both Hartington and the facts and options he laid before them. During 1883 the Dervishes grew in strength: in January they captured El Obeid; in October they massacred the Egyptian force sent from Suakin to Sinkat; in November they defeated the Egyptian expedition sent to relieve Tokar; and also in the same month news reached Cairo of the massacre of the Egyptian army under Hicks Pasha at El Obeid. Baring was appointed Consul and Agent-General in Cairo on 11 September 1883; on 19 November, after all the above listed events had taken place, he recommended the abandonment of the Sudan. The question now to be faced was whether the whole of the Sudan should be abandoned to the anarchic and fanatic rule of the Mahdi or whether Egypt should retain control over the most cultivated parts and if so, how these areas were to be defended.

In an memorandum written in November 1883 Wolseley recommended that Egypt should abandon all areas west of the White Nile with the exception of the bend of the Nile from Khartoum to Debbeh. Khartoum, Berber, and Suakin should be reinforced by Egyptian troops under the command of British officers. These positions were seen as crucial. Khartoum was at the junction of the White and Blue Niles and a centre for the trade for the whole of the Sudan; Berber was on the bend of the river within reasonable distance of Khartoum and at the start of the desert road to Suakin. Suakin itself was a port on the Red Sea which Wolseley and others wished to see built up to attract the trade of the area and to counteract the French threat of building a free port on the Red Sea. In a letter to Granville, Hartington urged the evacuation of only the western provinces

and apparently to have accepted Wolseley's recommendations in toto.[41]

Other officers had different ideas. For example, Charles Wilson wrote a memorandum in November 1883 urging the adoption of a more active policy than Wolseley. He wanted to see the Mahdi's rebellion crushed and before any withdrawal from Darfur and Kordofan. He also wanted to retain control of a wider area than Wolseley, retaining Khartoum, Sennar, the banks of the Nile, and the Equatorial Provinces: in other words, abandoning the territory to the west of Khartoum but holding on to land to the south, thereby making Khartoum the centre of the new Sudan and not the southernmost point as Wolseley recommended.[42]

The government announced on 20 November that the whole of the Sudan would be abandoned and on 26 January 1884 Gordon was sent to evacuate the Egyptian garrison from Khartoum. The decision then had to be taken on the best defensive position for Egypt Proper. Having regard for the political and historical as well as the strategic facts of the situation, Wolseley recommended the concentration of troops at Wadi Halfa, (the present day frontier of Egypt). Gordon, on the day before his departure, had recommended the same position, and the G.O.C. in Egypt, General Stephenson, agreed. Only the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, Evelyn Wood, disagreed, preferring to concentrate troops at Assouan further to the north.[43] It was generally agreed to be desirable to hold onto Suakin and a small Anglo-Egyptian force was sent under Graham to hold the port against the encroachments of the Mahdi's ally Osman Digna. In February and March 1884 Graham won small victories at El Teb and Tamai that did not crush Osman Digna but did at least relieve the immediate pressure on the garrison. The failure to crush Osman Digna had serious consequences. In May 1883 the idea of the construction of a railway from Suakin to Berber to assist the control of Khartoum had been mooted. Wolseley had at first been enthusiastic about the project.[44] Later he would become less keen as it appeared clear that the government had no strong opinion as to the desirability of building the railway. In fact, it could be

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41 Memo. by Wolseley, 23 Nov. 1883, WOP W31; Hartington to Granville, 23 Nov. 1883 in Robinson & Gallagher

42 Memo. by C. Wilson, Nov. 1883 in Sir Charles M. Watson, The Life of Major-General Sir Charles Wilson, (London, 1909), pp247-55

43 Memo. by Gordon, 25 Jan. 1884; Memo. by Stephenson, 8 Feb. 1884; Memo. by Wood, 11 Feb. 1884, all WOP W26

44 Memo. by Wolseley, 19 May 1883, CAB37/1

said that the whole question of the Suakin-Berber railway revealed the desire on the part of the Gladstone government to be seen to do something active in the Sudan without actually doing much. This was particularly evident after the government refused to countenance the idea of an expedition from Suakin to Berber in March 1884.

The lack of a policy quickly became evident. By sending a British officer to Khartoum the British government sent confusing signals to Egypt, the Dervishes, the great powers, and the British public about their intentions. As Wolseley pointed out in a memorandum, making Gordon the Governor-General of the Sudan 'does not accord with your declared intention of abandoning the Sudan'. Furthermore the Queen's Speech had referred to the interior of the Sudan, therefore suggesting that the government had changed its mind about total evacuation and now intended to retain the eastern Sudan with Khartoum as its capital. He went on to warn 'It is half measures, and no policy beyond waiting upon events, that causes us insensibly to drift into war'.[45] In April Wolseley again urged the government to define its policy because its wavering put Gordon in a very difficult position. Gordon was unlikely to win the support of the tribes surrounding Khartoum if they knew they were soon to be abandoned to their fate at the hands of the Mahdi. Without the support of these tribes Gordon's position would soon become untenable as he would be unable to obtain supplies and his route for withdrawing from Khartoum would be cut. In the middle of April all communication with Khartoum was cut and in May the news reached London that Berber had fallen. Wolseley was now convinced that Gordon's position had become impossible and that an expeditionary force should be sent to relieve him. He prepared a series of memoranda outlining how such an expedition could be sent.[46] The battle over the routes is irrelevant to the question of policy making but what is important is to consider how the government refused to take Gordon's position seriously. Letters between Gladstone and Hartington show that Gladstone was totally unable to accept the concept that all communication with Khartoum had been cut off and had been intermittent beforehand. He constantly expressed his view that Gordon must obey the orders sent

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45 Memo. by Wolseley, 8 Feb. 1884, WOP W26

46 Memoranda by Wolseley, 8 & 14 April 1884; 9 May 1884; 15, 19, 24 July 1884, all WOP W26; memo. by Hartington for the Cabinet, 15 May 1884 in B. Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton, 8th Duke of Devonshire, (London, 1911), p459

to him from Cairo to evacuate. Gladstone held this belief despite the lack of evidence to show that Gordon had received the relevant cable. Hartington, however, believed Wolseley and his letters show his despair at Gladstone's dilatoriness. For example, he complained to Granville that the Cabinet's obsession with the Franchise Bill, which he himself was working on, and the Conference of the powers on Egyptian finance meant that he got 'five minutes at the fag end, and was as usual put off'.[47]

Once the despatch of an expeditionary force was agreed Wolseley's orders were to advance into the Sudan and make arrangements to bring Gordon and Colonel Stewart away from Khartoum, but 'when that object has been secured no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken'.[48] Khartoum fell on 28th January and on 4 February the news reached London. Wolseley telegraphed that he had no instructions on what to do and was amazed to receive the reply from Hartington that 'we desire to check the Mahdi's advance in the provinces of the Sudan which he has not yet conquered by any means in our power'. Wolseley was initially delighted, replying to Hartington that 'you have now as a Government assumed a position in the Sudan that will eventually secure peace to Egypt, which your former policy of "scuttle" would not have accomplished'.[49]

Wolseley's euphoria was short-lived. His expedition had been sent like a bolt to be fired only once for a single purpose and could not be adjusted for any new policy. The situation in the Sudan was serious. The fall of Khartoum meant that the Mahdi had more forces under his command as well as more ammunition and guns; Wolseley's force on the other hand was near breaking point with over half the camels unfit for further service. There appeared little chance that Wolseley could even take Matemmeh, a town on the banks of the Nile close to where Wilson had boarded Gordon's steamers for the final approach to Khartoum, far less retake Berber which would be essential for all future operations. Furthermore the hot weather was beginning in earnest, making campaign conditions extremely hazardous, and the Nile was falling, creating serious supply difficulties. It became clear that a campaign to retake Khartoum and defeat the Mahdi

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47 Hartington to Granville, 15 July 1884 in Holland, p465-8
48 Hartington to Wolseley, 9 Oct. 1884, WOP W26
49 Hartington to Wolseley, 6 Feb. 1885; Wolseley to Hartington, 8 Feb. 1885, WOP W26

would have to wait for the cool weather in the autumn. This would require keeping a British force in the Sudan throughout the summer and then great expenditure in men and money in the autumn. The government changed its mind again and ordered Wolseley to withdraw.

Hartington reported to the Queen that Wolseley 'appears to accept the decision on military grounds, though objecting to it on political grounds'.[50] Wolseley had made his opinions about the necessity of defeating the Mahdi clear in a letter to the Queen: 'Our honour renders this imperative, but as soon as we have settled this false prophet and set up a native Government at Khartoum, I am sure the sooner we sever our connection with the Soudan the better'. He was under pressure to tell the government that its renewed plans for a railway from Suakin to Berber would benefit the conduct of his expedition either that spring or in the autumn. Wolseley refused to give the required reply. As he wrote to the Queen the railway would not be ready in time to help him but would benefit the future native government he hoped to see established in Khartoum.[51] Privately, Wolseley expressed other opinions on the Sudan and here he showed his ability to differentiate between the best course of action for his career advancement, a new campaign in the Sudan, and the best policy in British interests,

> but as an Englishman fully alive to our military weakness, to the almost impossibility of even carrying on the routine duties of peace with our existing Army establishments, I look upon the coming campaign with dislike... I cannot foresee when this coming war is to end.[52]

At times Wolseley appeared opposed to the retirement of British troops from the Sudan because of the indecision over whether and when they would advance again, and the question of the frontier of Egypt Proper reasserted itself. Wolseley and Brackenbury were in favour of retaining control of the Dongola province, the northernmost of the Sudan provinces, which would leave the options open for advance or retreat. If the government was determined to evacuate the Dongola province in opposition to all its military advisers then Brackenbury favoured falling back to Assouan

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50 Hartington to Queen, 15 April 1885 in Buckle, Vol. 3, 2nd series, p636
51 Wolseley to Queen, 22 March 1885 in Buckle, ibid., p630-2. The arguments about the railway are complex. The railway needed to be built quickly but the decision, to which Wolseley was opposed, to build the railway on the standard British gauge of 4'8" instead of a narrow gauge meant that it would not be ready in time. Wolseley blamed Stanley Clarke for this decision and took his revenge by refusing to recommend him for any reward for the Sudan campaign.
52 Journal 24 Feb. 1885, WO147/8

whereas Buller preferred Wadi Halfa.[53] In March 1886 the troops were withdrawn to Assouan.

Wolseley strongly held the opinion that until the Mahdi was defeated the British garrison in Egypt could never be withdrawn. As has already been noted he believed the acquisition of Egypt was unnecessary to British strategic interests. He outlined his views in a letter to his wife while still in the Sudan:

> Were I the despotic ruler of England I should be inclined to put in the Turk here, paying him a subsidy to rule the country and protect the frontier of Egypt. I should prefer spending my millions on fortifying my coaling stations all over the world, and in aims that would tend to the consolidation of our great but scattered empire.[54]

Wolseley like most other people over-estimated the Mahdi's power after the fall of Khartoum. In fact, as Baring put it, the Dervishes were mainly inactive and from the point of view of maintaining a large number of British troops for the defence of Egypt, after the battle of Ginniss in December 1885 the defence of the southern frontier of Egypt devolved onto the Egyptian army anyway.[55]

Egypt was not the only drain on military resources Wolseley deplored; he viewed India as a bottomless pit forever demanding more British troops while pursuing a plan of defence Wolseley thought was faulty. Wolseley's opinions on the subject developed little from the memoranda he had written during the height of the Eastern Crisis. His basic premises were that the events of the Second Afghan War had proved that Afghanistan was not the most suitable battleground for a major war with Russia, and that Britain was too weak to be able to provide the Indian military authorities with the number of soldiers they were demanding. His arguments ran along three lines: look elsewhere for suitable areas in which to fight Russia, make alliances with powers also opposed to Russian aggrandisement, and tell India once and for all to rely on her own military resources.

During the Pendjeh crisis of 1885 Wolseley privately outlined his plan for war with Russia. He wanted India to make an alliance with the Amir, build a railway to Kandahar or Girishk, and train the Afghan army and give them Martini-Henrys and ammunition. Then an

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53 Memo. by Wolseley, Brackenbury, and Buller, 11 Feb. 1886, WO32/8378
54 Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 26 Feb. 1885, WPP W/P
55 Cromer, Vol. II p60

Anglo-Indian force of 20,000 men should be collected at Quetta in early 1886 to fight Russia that summer.[56] The immediate crisis was over before Wolseley had the opportunity to present this outline to his political superiors but he repeated it in a memorandum for Stanhope in 1889. Here he also argued that Britain should make an alliance with the Sultan and use expeditionary forces from Britain to strike at the periphery of Russia, for example, from the Black Sea towards the Trans-Caspian railway, from the Persian Gulf with the same aim, from the Baltic against the Russian capital St Petersburg, and from Vladivostock on the Pacific seaboard. Wolseley's opinion was also supported by others at the War Office, such as Brackenbury, who urged the formation of an alliance with Turkey to open the Black Sea for a British attack on the Poti-Tiflis-Baku railway which would cut Russian communications with Turkestan.[57] Wolseley also advocated forging closer relations with Persia. He had first suggested this as early as 1873 when the Shah was visiting Britain, but it was only in the late 1880s and the early 1890s that the idea began to be taken seriously.[58] Britain, however, had left it too late, and as the British envoy in Teheran Drummond Wolff reported, Russia was rapidly gaining influence in Persia.[59] Plans to build a strategic railway from India to Persia through Beluchistan in order to defend southern Persia and the outlets to the Persian Gulf also came to nothing due to the Amir's obstinacy.

Roberts was strongly opposed to the policy pursued by Wolseley and Brackenbury: in a letter to Chapman he wrote,

> They know nothing about India, and they care nothing. Their object is to have everything in their own hands, and if they are able to guide the nation when war breaks out with Russia, they will embark on some wild scheme of operations in the neighbourhood of the Black Sea, and when they are hopelessly involved they will cripple India by indenting upon us for troops and transport.

In fact Roberts had already heard a rumour in 1888 that Wolseley and Brackenbury were planning to ask India what troops she could spare if India went on the defensive and the offensive operations were confined to the Caucasus.[60]

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56 Journal, 18 April 1885, WO147/8; Memo. by Wolseley, 25 Aug. 1889, WO33/A175
57 Memorandum by Brackenbury, 19 Aug. 1889, Stanhope Papers, 0231/1
58 G.J. Wolseley, 'Our Coming Guest', Blackwoods, Vol. CXIII, No. 692, (June 1873), pp712-21
59 Memorandum by H. Drummond Wolff, 27 July 1888, WOP W24/19a
60 Roberts to Brownlow, 9 March 1888, Roberts Papers, N.A.M. 7101-23-100/2; Roberts to Chapman, 1 Feb. 1889, 7101-23-100/6

The question of Indian defence appeared insoluble for two reasons: firstly, neither Wolseley nor Roberts could find a suitable battleground for a war with Russia and, secondly, the increasing demands for troops for India were placing such an unacceptable strain on the home army while not safeguarding India, that it seemed likely that India could not actually be defended at all. There can be no doubt that the Indian military authorities' favoured area of operations, Afghanistan, was unsuitable for prolonged warfare with large bodies of troops. The Amir was fiercely independent and there was every likelihood that even if India managed to forge an alliance with him, he might change sides during the war. Furthermore the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan would force any offensive force to operate in independent columns, all of which would be vulnerable to attack. A colonel in the Indian Army, H.B. Hanna, wrote three very detailed books which outlined the enormous difficulties Russia would face during an advance through Afghanistan, and it was clear that Indian difficulties would be no less extreme.[61]

Wolseley's schemes appeared to have no greater chance of success. Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson, in their book Imperial Defence clearly had their doubts. They pointed out that the Russian Army was strong in all areas of the Russian empire; for example, the peacetime strengths of the Russian Army were 700,000 men in Europe able to defend the Black Sea and Baltic, and 100,000 men in the Caucasus; and these numbers would be doubled on mobilisation. Furthermore the territory between the Persian Gulf and Russian Armenia, and between the Black Sea and the Caspian, was no more suitable for campaigning with a large force than Afghanistan. Dilke and Wilkinson also opposed the plans to defend India away from India itself on political grounds: Britain had to demonstrate its supremacy in order to retain control over a vast population that had already shown its disloyalty to the Crown once in 1857.[62] This was also of concern to the British politicians and the reason why the Cabinet gave credence to the warnings given by the government of India as Russia moved slowly closer to the Afghan frontier, building a strategic network of railways as she went.

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61 Col. H.B. Hanna, Can Russia Invade India?, India's Scientific Frontier: Where Is It?, Backwards or Forwards? (London 1895-6); Analysis of General Kuropatkin's scheme for the Invasion of India, Grierson & Brackenbury, Aug. 1886, WOP W24/16

62 Wilkinson & Dilke, Imperial Defence, p107

There was yet another question to be considered, whether Britain and India could afford the financial and manpower costs of the defence of India, and this matter reached a crisis point in 1887. The War Office Council decided that India must not depend on more battalions from Britain as part of her mobilisation plan, and this decision was transmitted to India by Stanhope in April 1887.[63] India ignored this statement of intent and continued to press for the promise of reinforcements in the event of war. Wolseley wrote in a memorandum in August 1889 that India could not afford the expansion of the army required by the mobilisation plan and nor could Britain. However, Wolseley did add that as a soldier he was in favour of India taking another 10,000 men from Britain because then the consequent increase in the establishment of the British Army would mean a huge increase in the size of the Army Reserve.[64] The politicians, however, were determined not to increase the establishment and therefore denied India the promise of reinforcements. In 1891 the Indian military authorities were devising a new mobilisation plan and Roberts again argued that in the event of war India would require 30,000 soldiers from Britain. The India Office attempted to support Roberts on this by stating that even if only 30,000 Russian troops crossed the border of India, the British and native armies might prove unequal to the task. This statement proved self-defeating; far from supporting the argument for reinforcements from Britain, it appeared to admit that India was the bottomless pit for British troops Wolseley had always suspected, and still unable to defend her borders. Therefore Roberts's request in 1892 for a first-line reinforcement of 30,000 troops in event of war with Russia was met with the reply that in the future India must rely on her own resources.[65]

The directive that India must rely on her own resources can be interpreted as a tacit admission that Britain's military resources were inadequate to defend the Empire in time of war against Russia or France, or, after the Franco-Russian alliance, against both powers at the same time. Wolseley had no doubt at all that this was the case. There were three possible solutions, all of which had disadvantages and were politically risky. The first was to increase military

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63 Meeting at the War Office, 1 April 1887, WO163

64 Strategy for the defence of India in a possible war with Russia, Wolseley, 25 Aug. 1889, WO33/49

65 The 1891 Indian Mobilisation Plan called for 697 officers and six complete infantry battalions to be sent from Britain to India. Memo. on the Defence of India, India Office, 1891, CAB37/30; I.F.W. Beckett, 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office, 1887-92', Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 5, (June 1982), pp 278-307

establishments to cover existing commitments. The second was to acknowledge the fact that Britain alone could not defend her Empire and to forge alliances with one or more powers. The third was to reconsider the whole question of imperial defence, decide the main strategic points to be defended, and turn this into a statement of the purposes for which the army existed.

There can be no doubt that the military establishment needed to be increased. In his annual statement to the Secretary of State for War, Hartington, in March 1884, the Duke outlined the existing problems: the force in India was 5,000 men under establishment at a time of tension, since Russia had just annexed Merv; the Royal Artillery needed 1,000 men to complete its establishment following the recent reform; the Fenians were active on the mainland and Ireland was showing signs of growing disturbance. To meet the possible crises he wrote, 'with the exception of the Guards, we have no really effective Battalions of Infantry at home fit to be at once employed on any emergency arising, whether at home or abroad'.[66] The situation was worsened when Wolseley led his expeditionary force into the Sudan. The critical point was reached when Hartington telegraphed Wolseley on 13 March 1885 asking whether the removal of Graham's force from Suakin to India would make any difference to his own operations. Wolseley's response was that Britain had no business undertaking two wars at the same time in her weak state.[67]

The establishment did increase in response to the 1885 crisis with the addition of 18,000 men whereas the occupation of Egypt had led to no significant increase. These increases had to be made with great care and justification so that the public would accept the need and provide the money. Wolseley analysed the public attitude in a letter to his wife: 'The English people howl for the conquest of the Soudan, but if you told them that it means increasing the Army by 21,000 men, they tear their hair and say all the military authorities must be fools and knaves not to have an Army fit to bear the strain'.[68] Wolseley and the government were quite right to suspect the degree of public support they held: no sooner had the crisis passed than the Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill began the campaign both inside and outside Parliament to reduce naval and military expenditure which led to his resignation in December 1886.

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66 Cambridge to Hartington, 1 March 1884, in Verner, p308
67 Journal, 24 Feb. 1885, WO147/8
68 Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 26 Feb. 1885, WPP W/P

Wolseley's views on alliances were complex. He appears to have viewed alliances as necessary only when Britain was in actual danger of becoming embroiled in a major war. The only evidence that Wolseley supported Maurice's proposal that Britain should join the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy comes from Maurice himself: 'In the course of conversation with me, Lord Wolseley had expressed the view that in the present condition of affairs we have the strongest interest in joining those Powers who desire to preserve peace, and in resisting those who threaten disturbance'.[69] Given Wolseley's readiness to write memoranda on almost every issue it appears strange that no memoranda on the subject of alliances appear in his papers or correspondence. Had Wolseley shared Maurice's views then it is extremely likely that he would have mentioned joining the Triple Alliance at some stage during the 1887-8 invasion scares. It is probably more likely that Wolseley shared Dilke's opinion, 'we have to face the fact that we are one of the least popular of the Powers, and that if we alone were attacked no hand would be raised in our defence'.[70]

The question of determining for what purposes the army existed and what were its requirements turned on the basic problem of whether any statement issued should be general, covering broad issues of imperial defence, or specific, assigning priorities to named regions. Wolseley would probably have preferred the latter. This chapter has argued that Wolseley held strong opinions on the question of imperial defence and, unlike most of the politicians, was ready to accept that some areas of the Empire, such as South Africa, were of more critical importance than others, such as Egypt. The Carnarvon Commission had analysed each area of the Empire and assigned defence priorities to each region, and like Wolseley, it had emphasised the importance of the Cape. The Commission's report was, however, politically unacceptable partly because fulfilment of its recommendations and acknowledgement of its system of priorities reacted against the workings of parliamentary democracy, since one party could not remove the freedom of

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69 Maurice, Introduction.

70 Dilke, Present Position, p284. The opinion of Dilke and of Maurice was that since France threatened Britain both at home and in her colonies and Russia threatened India the obvious course to follow was to join the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy. Not only would all three powers join Britain against Russia for the security of Europe thereby possibly achieving the protection of India, but Austria and Italy had an equally strong desire to control French power in the Mediterranean. This last point was achieved by the Mediterranean Agreements negotiated by Salisbury in 1889.

foreign policy decision making from its successors.[71] The legacy of the Carnarvon Commission was the Colonial Defence Committee, which served as a conduit for defence plans for the colonies without considering the broader issues of desirability and feasibility of defence.

Another argument against a statement of specific requirements was that it would be inflexible. Salisbury argued in a speech to the House of Lords in May 1888 that a statement of military purposes was neither desirable nor possible:

> We are to make ourselves safe, it is said. But safety is not an absolute term. You cannot write down so many soldiers and so many sailors are what will make England safe. They are what will make England safe against some supposed attack; you must know what your enemy is likely to be before you know whether your preparations are likely to be sufficient... The question of defence is a question which involves not only the War Office and the Admiralty, but the Foreign Office as well... Therefore, my Lords, I deprecate the idea that it is possible for any Government to lay down an absolute standard of safety. They must place the country in such a position that it will be safe against any danger which it is reasonably likely to incur.[72]

Salisbury was quite correct to point out the dangers of a specific list of military purposes since, for example, any such statement drawn up before 1882 would not have foreseen the requirement to maintain a garrison in Egypt. Wolseley appears to have accepted this point in Salisbury's argument, and his memoranda demonstrate the desire for a loose and flexible statement of the purposes and priorities of the British Army which could serve both as a basis for the distribution of the army, and for mobilisation planning.

Wolseley first produced a list of the purposes of the army in an article he wrote for Macmillan's Magazine in 1871. His list reflected the current state of affairs: home defence was the main requirement, and India, before the Second Afghan War and Russian advances in Asia, did not warrant a section to itself. He showed his political awareness too by remembering the danger posed to Belgium, whose integrity was guaranteed by Britain, during the recent Franco-Prussian War. Therefore Wolseley added to his list 'the liability of having to send a contingent of 100,000 men to the continent of Europe to assist an ally'.[73]

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71 The freedom to change the angle of foreign policy was an important one. For example, the Liberal government reversed the Conservative policy of expansion in the Cape in 1881. In 1885 the Conservative government briefly reversed the Liberal government's policy of withdrawal from the Sudan.
72 Salisbury to House of Lords, 14 May 1888, Hansard, Vol. CCCXXVI
73 Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements'. Britain was also a guarantor of Portugal through another treaty.

By 1875 Wolseley's list of priorities had changed substantially. Home defence remained the first priority, but the need to provide a 'depot and a small reserve for the army in India' made its first appearance. Perhaps as a result of the Ashanti campaign Wolseley also added the need to supply small expeditions against 'savage nations'.[74] In a further memorandum in 1880 Wolseley concentrated on the immediate tasks of the home army. It again emphasised that the army must be able to form 'the nucleus of an army which in accordance with treaty engagements we might at any moment have to land in the Low Countries, or to send abroad to vindicate the honour of the nation, or to secure some national aim or object'.[75] This memorandum also reflected Wolseley's response to the planned despatch of an expeditionary force during the Eastern Crisis 'to secure some national aim', and the importance of upholding the honour of Britain by punishing those, like the Afghans and Zulus, who dared to damage the national reputation. The memorandum went on to outline the readiness to despatch a force of two complete divisions for the defence of India, an idea which would develop into the formation of two or three Army Corps for action anywhere in the world.

Wolseley's memoranda were largely ignored, and the short-term responses, or 'half-measures' as Wolseley would have called them, continued. By the time Stanhope became Secretary of State for War in 1886 it was obvious that the British Army was at breaking point, and that one solution was to give it a statement of purposes for which it existed so that the military authorities could use this in order to decide the size of the establishment required and the necessary organisation and distribution. The result of prolonged pressure from Wolseley was the issue of the Stanhope Memorandum on 8 December 1888. This was circulated only to the Cabinet. It was reissued in June 1891 but again was not made public.

A comparison of the provisions demonstrates the debt Stanhope owed to Wolseley's memorandum of 8 June 1888.[76] In both, aid to the civil power was made the first priority. On the second requirement of the army Stanhope contented himself with the vague phrase 'to find the number of men for India which has been fixed by arrangement with the Government of India'.

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74 Memo. by Wolseley, 15 Jan. 1875, WOP W37
75 Memo. by Wolseley, 16 Oct. 1880, WPP W/W1/1
76 Memo. by Stanhope, 8 Dec. 1888, Stanhope Papers, 0232/2; Memo. by Wolseley, 8 June 1888, WO33/48

Wolseley, on the other hand, went further in calling for a fixed establishment of British troops in India and the coaling stations of '19,000 effective and well-trained young soldiers'. Stanhope placed the provision of men for fortresses and coaling stations under another heading, pledging to keep the garrisons at the 'scale now laid down'.

The fundamental differences between Wolseley's interpretation of military requirements and the opinions held by Stanhope appears in the last two headings. Wolseley argued the need to provide, exclusive of troops abroad, 'three complete Army Corps and six brigades of Cavalry, all being of Regular troops. This field army to be in addition to a large force of Auxiliary troops...'. This was to provide for home defence against invasion. In contrast, Stanhope stipulated the ability to mobilise two Army Corps of Regulars and one of a combination of Regular and Militia troops. Lastly Wolseley proposed the additional provision of two Army Corps, one Cavalry Division, and the necessary troops for protection of the base and line of communications for action abroad without specifying where this force was likely to be deployed. In contrast Stanhope added

> But it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of the Army Corps in the field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of the military authorities to organise our forces efficiently for the defence of the country.

This reflects the attitude of governments following the omission in 1868 from the preamble to the Mutiny Act, which defined the purpose of the army, of the phrase 'the preservation of the balance of power in Europe'.

Wolseley was not satisfied with the Stanhope Memorandum primarily because he had not achieved his aim of increasing the size of the home army. He wrote in a memorandum in December 1888 that 'The mobilisation scheme of 1886 has so misled the Secretary of State, and it is feared the Government also, that it is very much to be regretted we did not in the first instance pay over excessive attention to the mobilisation of a manoeuvring army for the defence of England against invasion'. Wolseley was arguing that Brackenbury's and Ardagh's plans for home defence, which will be covered in the following chapter, were based on what was possible, and not on what was necessary. The government had not questioned the numbers outlined in the mobilisation plans and had ignored Wolseley's demand for greater resources for home defence. Therefore Wolseley

concluded his critique of the Stanhope Memorandum by stating that

> the responsibility for that decision is theirs [the politicians'] exclusively. It is not based in any degree on the opinions of the military authorities who wish to place on record their unanimous opinion that this country cannot be rendered safe from invasion with a smaller mobile force of regular troops than three complete army corps and a cavalry division assisted by the auxiliary forces of the Crown...[77]

The Stanhope Memorandum has been criticised on other criteria too. Adrian Preston has argued that its list of requirements was rejected by the Cabinet because insufficient attention was paid to the defence of India.[78] This argument is not supported by the evidence because it is clear that by this stage the government was already moving towards the position it made unquestionably clear in 1892, that India must rely on her own resources. John Gooch argued that the memorandum was 'more suited to the conditions of 1818 than 1888', probably because it largely dismissed the possibility of Britain becoming entangled in European politics and possibly a war.[79] It is much fairer to argue, like Edward Spiers and Howard Bailes, that the Stanhope memorandum was primarily a document of its time: it reflected accurately current concerns and issues, such as aid to the civil power and home defence, and made no attempt to predict the future direction of military and foreign policy.[80] Wolseley did not question the order of requirements laid down for the army because it closely followed his own list. His dissatisfaction with Stanhope's work was that it had failed to use the evidence supplied by Wolseley to pressurise the government into increasing the size of the home establishment. Therefore if the determination of military policy was insufficient to convince the government of this need, Wolseley would have to seize whatever opportunity he was given in the future to press his case for the expansion of the army. His first opportunity came when giving evidence to the Wantage Committee, but his real drive towards a solution of the manpower crisis came when Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief.

In the area of imperial defence Wolseley was ahead of his time. He deplored the effects of the lack of clear and intelligible principles underlying government policy. His memoranda mostly

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77 Memo. on the Stanhope Memorandum, Wolseley, 30 Dec. 1888, WPP W/MEM/3
78 Preston, 1875, p66
79 J. Gooch, The Plans of War, (London 1974)
80 Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p61; I.F.W. Beckett, 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office, 1887-92'; Ibid., 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: a Reinterpretation' in Bulletin of the I.H.R. Vol. LVII, No. 136, (Nov. 1984) pp240-7; Bailes, Ph.D. thesis.

demonstrate that Wolseley had a clear idea of how the Empire could best be defended, and how the army could undertake this requirement. His opinions were, however, largely ignored. Britain accepted Cyprus as a base in the Eastern Mediterranean without any evidence on its suitability for this role. The occupation of Egypt was made for commercial purposes, and military considerations were used only later, against Wolseley's advice, as an argument for the continued British presence in Egypt. Robinson and Gallagher have identified a clear policy change of British interests from Constantinople to Cairo;[81] Wolseley would have argued that this was not a policy decision but a mere reaction to events. It was also ill-conceived and of little value. Wolseley never saw the occupation of Egypt as requirement for imperial defence, but this opinion, though shared by a few others, was largely ignored. Wolseley was a little more successful in his advocacy of a strong British position on South Africa. Successive governments were forced to boost the British presence in South Africa after the First Boer War and in 1887 Cape Town was formally acknowledged as the principal staging post for reinforcements sent to India in the event of war with Russia.[82] Nevertheless Wolseley argued that the misconceived policy pursued and evidence of British weakness in 1881 led directly to the Second Boer War. While at the War Office Wolseley's opinions on the defence of India was generally accepted in Britain but not in India and arguments on this subject would continue after Wolseley retired.

Wolseley did achieve the statement of military purposes he desired through the Stanhope Memorandum. It was an unsatisfactory document but it was important at the time as a basis for future mobilisation planning and as evidence that a government was prepared to examine the question of the purposes of the army which boded well for the future. Nevertheless its immediate effect was limited, and it has been suggested that Buller, when giving evidence to the Wantage Committee, did not know of the existence of the memorandum. Nor, apparently, did Arnold-Forster, whose writings include an appeal for a definition of policy.[83]

The value of Wolseley's opinions on imperial defence was diminished by the lack of a forum in which to make them known. He could only submit his recommendations to the Secretary

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81 Robinson & Gallagher, chapter 8.
82 James, p251
83 Beckett, Stanhope Memorandum; Arnold-Forster, War Office, p80

of State in the hope that he would distribute Wolseley's memoranda to the Cabinet. Wolseley was on occasion consulted directly on issues but he had no power to force them on the government; policy making remained the province of the Cabinet alone. Had a forum like the Committee of Imperial Defence existed while Wolseley was at the War Office there can be no doubt that Wolseley would have been an energetic member whose opinions would have been hard to ignore. The result was that Wolseley's arguments that the army was too small to undertake all its responsibilities and that these responsibilities should be defined according to the requirements of imperial defence were largely ignored until the evidence of the Second Boer War made it very clear that the size of the Empire was too large for the army to defend.

Chapter 7 - Home Defence

The subject of home defence has already been well covered by historians: Howard Moon produced a two volume Ph.D. thesis on the subject, and more recently Norman Longmate and Keith Wilson have added to the literature.[1] Therefore this chapter will concentrate on those aspects of home defence closely connected with Wolseley. Wolseley made home defence a priority requirement of the British Army whenever he produced memoranda on the purposes for which the army existed. This priority was given official recognition in the 1888 Stanhope Memorandum. During this period Wolseley was particularly involved in three issues concerning home defence: the first was the controversy over whether to build a tunnel under the English Channel; the second was the invasion scares of 1887-8; and the third was the relationship between the War Office and the Admiralty over the roles the army and navy should play in the defence of Britain.

Home defence and the perceived threat of invasion were emotive issues arousing widespread public interest. This chapter will examine how Wolseley sometimes led and sometimes merely responded to public opinion, and how it affected his actions. It will also become clear that home defence was one area in which Wolseley and the Duke of Cambridge were in total agreement. Furthermore, on some aspects of the home defence arguments they received political support, whereas on others they had to faced the usual struggle to convince their political masters of the vulnerability of Britain to invasion.

Public awareness of Britain's vulnerability to foreign invasion was not a new issue. Excluding Ireland, British soil had not been invaded by troops of a foreign power since Culloden in 1746, but the threat of France under Napoleon III in the 1860s had forced the government to build a series of forts and gun emplacements on the south coast, the so-called 'Palmerston follies'. The sight of the huge conscripted armies of Germany, Austria and France manoeuvring across Europe prompted more alarm. On 21 January 1871 the former Prime Minister Lord John Russell

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[1] H. Moon, 'The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning, 1888-1918', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1968); N. Longmate, Island Fortress, (London 1991); K. Wilson, Channel Tunnel Visions, 1850-1945, (London 1994)

echoed the sentiments printed in the Pall Mall Gazette twelve days earlier that England was open to invasion and that a force of 200,000 troops, regular and auxiliary, should be retained in Britain to defeat an invader. In May 1871 Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George Chesney published 'The Battle of Dorking' in Blackwoods Magazine. Reprinted as a 6d. pamphlet a month later, over 80,000 copies had been sold by the end of that summer. Chesney's work was only the first, though perhaps the best, of the new genre of books on invasion. Ten years later Wolseley's follower Sir William Butler published his version of threat facing Britain in The Invasion of England. Like The Battle of Dorking it purported to have been written by an old soldier looking back on how easily England was defeated and aimed to serve as a warning. In 1897 William Le Queux wrote The Great War in England in 1897, with a preface by Wolseley. This was adapted with the encouragement of Lord Northcliffe for serialisation in the new popular newspaper the Daily Mail, and this version was later issued in book form with a preface by Roberts.[2]

Given the popularity of invasion literature Wolseley had an attentive public to which to present his opinions on home defence. The first major threat to Britain's domestic security came with the proposal to build a tunnel from Dover to the French coast. Initially there was no opposition to the scheme. In 1875 the chairman of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, Sir Alfred Watkin, introduced a Private Member's Bill in Parliament which proposed the construction of a railway tunnel under the English Channel. The French government was consulted and agreed to the scheme. Therefore permission was granted by Parliament for the company to begin experimental tunnelling and the first shafts were sunk in 1880.

In December 1881 Wolseley wrote his first memorandum on the Channel tunnel. He announced that the construction of the tunnel could

> be fairly described as a measure intended to annihilate all the advantages we have hitherto enjoyed from the existence of the "silver streak", for to join England to the Continent by a permanent highway, will be to place her under the unfortunate condition of having neighbours possessing great standing armies... The construction of the tunnel would place us under those same conditions that have forced the Powers of Europe to submit to universal service.[3]

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2 I.F. Clarke, Voices Prophesying War, 1763-1984 (London, 1970), pp32-65

3 Correspondence with reference to the Proposed Construction of a Channel Tunnel, c3358 (1882) XVII

He made the same point in a speech to the debating society of University College London: conscription was unnecessary so long as the English Channel remained 'neither bridged over nor tunnelled under by a band of speculators'.[4] In this memorandum Wolseley also introduced a theme he would refer to again later, the speed with which an enemy could open hostilities. He asked his friend Maurice to provide the evidence for this belief. Maurice responded by writing Hostilities without Declaration of War in early 1883, which listed the occasions in the past when wars had begun without a formal declaration. The production of this pamphlet not only provided the War Office with some of the evidence it needed to oppose the tunnel, but also served in the future to remind politicians of the speed in which countries could move from peaceful relations to war.[5]

Wolseley was urged by the Duke and Childers to make his hostility to the tunnel known to the public.[6] Initially Childers arranged for Wolseley's views to be published by Lord Dunsany in an article which appeared in the February 1882 issue of the Nineteenth Century.[7] The public response was immediate: the windows of the offices of the Channel Tunnel Company were smashed by angry Londoners, and in April 1882 a mass petition was organised by the editor of the journal Nineteenth Century, James Knowles, and was signed by many important public figures including 59 generals and 17 admirals.[8] In Parliament two conflicting points of view quickly became apparent. Lord Bradbourne, who had an interest in the tunnel company, drew attention to the fact that the France felt no threat from the tunnel and that having agreed with France that the scheme was possible, drawing back at this stage gave a clear message to the French 'that we thought them dangerous neighbours who were not to be trusted'. Lord Strathnairn introduced an issue that Wolseley fully agreed with, the danger of Fenian action against the tunnel given the acute disaffection in Ireland in the early 1880s.[9] The government was forced to take action, and it set up a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by Lord Lansdowne to examine the arguments. The War Office formed a Military and Scientific Committee under Lieutenant-General

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4 The Times, 24 May 1882
5 J.F. Maurice, 'Hostilities Without Declaration of War', WO33/39
6 Cambridge to Wolseley, 17 Jan. 1882; Childers to Cambridge, 14, 16 & 17 Feb. 1882, RA E/1/9899, 9923, 9925, 9927
7 Lord Dunsany, 'The Proposed Channel Tunnel', Nineteenth Century, Vol. 11, (Feb. 1882) pp288-304
8 Clarke, p110
9 21 Feb. 1882, Hansard, Vol. CCLXVI; 31 March 1882, Vol. CCLXVIII

Sir Archibald Alison for the same purpose. In April the Board of Trade ordered the Channel Tunnel Company to stop boring operations until the War Office committee had reported.

Wolseley was not made a member of the Scientific Committee. Indeed membership of the committee would have been of no benefit to him because it was purely concerned with an examination of the means of defending the tunnel. In its report issued on 17 May 1882 the committee discussed the matter under two headings: the first, surprise from within, i.e. treachery; and secondly, attack from without. The report detailed plans for fortifications, closure or temporary obstructions such as a portcullis and closing of the air shafts, explosion by mines or charges, and either temporary or permanent flooding of the tunnel.[10] The committee's brief had not been to recommend whether or not the tunnel should be constructed, but nevertheless a recommendation against the tunnel's construction was implicit in its conclusions. Childers was prepared to go even further in his support of Wolseley, and asked Wolseley to prepare another memorandum based on the conclusions of the Scientific Committee. He urged Wolseley to 'take care that it is sent to the public printers for publication in the shape of an official protest. I am quite prepared to put upon it officially that I fully concur in the views therein expressed, having already done so on your Confidential minute'.[11] Childers's actions demonstrate the depth of his hostility to the tunnel scheme for he was encouraging Wolseley to publicise his opinions at a time when the negotiations over Wolseley's appointment as Adjutant General had turned partly on Wolseley's use of the press. The difference was, of course, that on this occasion Wolseley had the support of both the Duke and the Secretary of State.

In his memorandum of 16 June 1882 Wolseley described his views on the subject at length. While agreeing with the conclusions of the Scientific Committee, he went further into the question than the committee's remit had permitted them, and entered into the question of the desirability of the tunnel *per se*. Wolseley's principal objection to the tunnel was that Britain had been saved from the cost of maintaining huge standing armies on a Continental scale by having the natural protection of a 'great wet ditch' protecting her from aggressive neighbours. As early as

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10 Report of the Military Committee on the Channel Tunnel, 17 May 1882, WO33/39
11 Wilson, p37

1871 Wolseley had estimated that it was possible for 100,000 enemy soldiers to land on the southern shore of England.[12] Other commentators put the figure for a likely invasion force at nearer 40,000. In this memorandum Wolseley argued that the construction of a tunnel would reduce the figure for a successful invasion to 20,000. These soldiers would hold the entrance, enabling reinforcements to be brought over quickly through the tunnel. Wolseley estimated that 'the seizing of the tunnel by a coup de main it is in my opinion a very simple operation' provided no advance warning had been given. He summed up his fears thus:

> It must be remembered that the works at our end of the tunnel may be surprised by men sent through the tunnel itself, without landing a man upon our shores. A couple of thousand men might easily come through the tunnel in a train at night, avoiding all suspicion by being dressed as ordinary passengers, or passing at express speed through the tunnel with the blinds down and fully armed...[13]

In his memorandum on the subject the Duke agreed with Wolseley's views on the threat of a *coup de main* by drawing attention to the fact that the Fenians had in the past attacked Chester Castle, and that no guarantee could be given that they would not attack the Dover fortifications to coincide with a French attempt on the tunnel.[14]

Despite the support of the Duke and Childers Wolseley still needed to convince the parliamentary committee of the dangers of the Channel tunnel scheme. In his evidence before the Joint Select Committee Wolseley played a very cunning political game. He pointed out that all the precautions recommended by the Scientific Committee would be essential to safeguard the tunnel in times of peace but might not be sufficient in time of war. These plans were costly, though no estimates had been drawn up. Further expenditure would be essential on a regular basis as 'Dover was by no means a first-class fortress; indeed, it could only be put into the third-class category'. Its armament was out-dated, and its garrison only a fraction of what would be essential to guard the mouth of the tunnel.[15] Given the cost of building fortifications for the tunnel itself, strengthening the fortifications of Dover Castle, installing new modern armament, building barracks for and maintaining a larger force in the garrison, it is perhaps unsurprising that the

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12 Wolseley, 'Our Military Requirements',
13 Memo. on the Channel Tunnel, 16 June 1882, WO33/39
14 Memo. on the Channel Tunnel, 23 June 1882, WO33/39
15 Report of the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Channel Tunnel, (1883) XII. Wolseley's evidence was also published in The Times, 22 June 1883

government rejected the idea of the construction of a tunnel under the Channel. Indeed, it is more likely that the cost of providing security was the principal deciding factor in the rejection of the scheme, and not Wolseley's somewhat far-fetched fears of trainloads of French soldiers pretending to be civilians passing through the tunnel.

The Joint Select Committee surprisingly reported in favour of the tunnel yet the committee was badly divided on the issue. Only three members were prepared to sign the report, and six submitted separate minority reports outlining the reasons for their hostility to the scheme. In July 1883 the government decided to stop the construction of the tunnel permanently. Alfred Watkin was not easily deterred from his great project and made numerous attempts to win support for it.[16] However Wolseley and his colleagues had created so much doubt on the security of the tunnel that no government during the period was prepared to announce to the public that it had dismissed military opinion on the vital issue of home defence.

Before turning to a detailed examination of the invasion scares of the 1880s it is useful to outline Wolseley's general views on the subject. He is quite correctly associated with the group of military men pressing for an increase in both the quantity and quality of the force that would be called upon to repel any invader. But this does not mean that he was not in sympathy with the demands of the Navy. Throughout his career, in both articles and speeches, Wolseley claimed that if he 'had only one million to spend on defences, I would spend it on our Navy'.[17] Nevertheless, he as consistently disputed the Navy's claim to be the only defence necessary. In an article written for the Queen's Jubilee in 1887 he explained why:

> Every extension of our commerce served and still serves to render the concentration of our fleets in the Channel for home protection all the more impossible. The loss of one great naval battle there would leave our coasts open to easy invasion.[18]

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16 Watkin reintroduced his Channel Tunnel Bill in 1883 and it was swiftly rejected by 222 votes to 84. Subsequent reintroductions met with the same fate, although the majority against the bill fell steadily, until in 1887 it was defeated by only 76 votes. In 1893 the War Office was again asked for its opinion and the Adjutant General, Buller, reported that no military man was in favour of the tunnel. In 1894 Watkin abandoned his project. Wilson, p47; Memo on the Channel Tunnel, 2 March 1893, CAB37/33; Longmate, p360

17 Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 16 Aug. 1895, WPP LW/P/21

18 Wolseley, 'The Army'

British imperial interests demanded that the Navy should be scattered across the world. Commercial interests were undoubtedly just as important since Britain was fast becoming a net importer of food; although Wolseley felt that Britain had too many ports to allow an enemy to blockade her into submission or starvation. The multitude of tasks facing the Navy in time of war made it preferable to have 'two strings to your bow'.[19] For these reasons Wolseley wanted not only an army of a size and organisation capable of repelling an invader, but also a ring of fortifications round London to relieve the Navy of the task of the defence of the capital.

The desire to publicise the state of the home army was perhaps the overriding factor behind Wolseley's manipulation of events in France to create the invasion scares. In 1886 General Boulanger became Minister for War in the French Cabinet and he, and his naval colleague, St Aube, made a number of bellicose statements on the strength of France. Brackenbury, the head of the Intelligence Department, described Boulanger as 'a type of politico-military adventurer', whose actions might prove unpredictable.[20] Either Boulanger would direct his attentions towards Germany and agitate for the return of Alsace and Lorraine, or he might remind the French public of the humiliation France had encountered at British hands when Britain alone had taken the opportunity of one of the periodic Cabinet crises of the Third Republic to crush the Arabi revolt and subsequently rule Egypt alone. Germany was strong and Britain was seen as weak, therefore it was feared that in order to relieve her internal tensions France might turn against her weak neighbour to gain some domestic and international kudos.

Wolseley agreed with Brackenbury's assessment of Boulanger and used it as a means of publicising Britain's vulnerability to invasion. There was no doubt that Wolseley had good grounds for concern. For example, in his study of the military situation at home and abroad in August 1886, Brackenbury concluded that although studies had been made of the coasts and the positions lying between them and London

> we are still without any organisation for the assembly, the supply, or the transport of our scattered forces; we are still without any comprehensive plan of defence... There are points on our coast, within an easy four days' march of London, well

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19 Comments of chairman to the meeting of the Military Society of Ireland, 19 Dec. 1894.

20 General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint, Brackenbury, 3 Aug. 1886, WO33/46

> suited for the disembarkation of a large force and absolutely without defensive works, while London itself... lies undefended at the mercy of the invader.[21]

This assessment forced Stanhope to allow Wolseley to make plans to remedy the situation.

Typically, the main stumbling block proved to be obtaining the necessary finance. Ironically it was the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Randolph Churchill, who unwittingly provided Wolseley with the assistance he required. In a speech on army and navy expenditure at Wolverhampton in June 1887 Churchill drew attention to the fact that Britain was undefended despite the vast expenditure on the army and navy. Therefore Wolseley could turn this argument around and argue that far from the retrenchment urged by Churchill, public support should be mobilised to secure further expenditure.[22]

The Cabinet demanded to know whether the situation was as bad as Churchill had portrayed in his speech. In a memorandum on the Wolverhampton speech the War Office was forced to admit that 'it is true that none of our fortresses are at present armed in accordance with the military requirements of the day'. On Churchill's quotation of Wolseley's comments on the state of the artillery it was pointed out that the situation was being remedied slowly. The new 13pr. was superior to the field guns of France and Germany, and the 16pr. was only slightly inferior in velocity.[23] The delays in ordering modern artillery had been caused largely by the reluctance of the artillery to change from muzzle to breech-loaders. A further report by the War Office in 1887 also highlighted the vulnerability of London. Should an invader invest London then there was only four weeks' supply of meat, thirteen weeks' of wheat, and four to five weeks' supply of coal within the capital.[24] This was assuming that control of the Thames and the railways had been lost.

Stanhope set up a consultative committee in 1887 to consider the fortification and armament of military and naval ports and Wolseley's evidence to this committee illustrates his views on invasion. He assigned the priorities of defence to the ports of Portsmouth and Plymouth, followed by the Thames and Cork. The first two ports were named because Wolseley, despite what his critics argued, did believe that Britain's first line of defence was her Navy, and these

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21 Ibid.
22 The Times, 4 June 1887
23 Report in explanation of statements made in Randolph Churchill's Wolverhampton speech, June 1887, CAB37/20
24 Abstract of the report on the meat, wheat, and coal supply of London, 1887, WOP W18/25

were the two most important naval and military ports. The Thames was of importance because of commerce and public sentiment. It was generally accepted within military circles that any perceived threat to London would result in a general panic among the population which could contribute to the defeat of Britain. If the Navy was drawn away from the Channel to defend London, then the coasts would be so much more vulnerable to invasion. Hence the need for fortifications around London to relieve the Navy of this task. The naming of Cork provides another illustration of Wolseley's distrust of the Irish. The port needed to be defended to make invasion impossible and so that Ireland could supply England with troops for home defence rather than calling for troops from England.

Wolseley's evidence is of interest for other reasons too. Unlike most of the military men and commentators he saw the main threat as coming on the east coast between Harwich and Southend. When the ring of forts surrounding London was mapped out, the north east was indeed covered, but it was generally accepted that the main threat lay on the Sussex coast. It is also significant that Wolseley, for all his posturing on the danger of invasion, was forced to admit in his evidence that 'it is some time since I read and studied that question; I did know them, but I have forgotten the various points where troops could be most easily landed.'[25] This means that doubt can be cast on the depth of Wolseley's knowledge of the invasion issue, and illustrates the degree to which he was forced to rely on the information supplied by colleagues such as Brackenbury and Ardagh.

Wolseley's ignorance of some of the finer points of the invasion issue may be excused by an explanation of his position in the War Office at this time. Before the 1888 reorganisation of the War Office the Intelligence Department was in the office of the Quartermaster-General. After the reorganisation of departments within the War Office, the Intelligence Department was moved from the office of the Quartermaster General to that of the Adjutant General. This should have meant that Wolseley received more information on intelligence matters but the newly-styled Director of Military Intelligence, Brackenbury, reported directly to the Commander-in-Chief. In 1888 the

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25 Report of the Committee to consider the Plans for the Fortification and Armament of our Military and Mercantile Ports, 1887, WO33/47

Mobilisation and Home Defence Section under Ardagh moved into the Adjutant General's department where Wolseley would exercise a supervisory role.[26] The official situation was therefore somewhat complicated, and some of Wolseley's knowledge of the activities of the Intelligence Department resulted from his friendship with Brackenbury rather than official notification. This could and did lead to awkwardness. In July 1888 Wolseley was asked by Stanhope to brief him on the invasion question but, as Brackenbury pointed out to Grove, he was unable to provide Wolseley with all the evidence needed to make his case. In this instance the problem centred on a memorandum written by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton to the Cabinet, which, being a Cabinet document, was not available for general circulation.[27]

Wolseley delegated the task of producing schemes to safeguard Britain from invasion to his Assistant Adjutant General, Ardagh who produced the first plan in April 1888. The principal mobilisation planning had been undertaken by Brackenbury during 1886 but Wolseley directed Ardagh to turn his attention on how best to defend Britain from invasion. In his memorandum Ardagh outlined the assignment of all the home defence forces, regular and auxiliary, into three Army Corps and three cavalry divisions. Of these Army Corps, two would be entirely composed of regulars and the third partly of regulars and partly Militia. Behind these would be three more Army Corps of Volunteers. After mobilisation these corps would be distributed by brigades or divisions at principal railway junctions between London and the coast so as to be able to concentrate rapidly when the line of the enemy march became apparent. Two corps would be in Sussex and Kent, and the third near Colchester. The Volunteers would be assembled between the regular army and London.[28]

Wolseley was not satisfied with the size of the force to be used for home defence and turned to the public for support. In May 1888 Wolseley made a speech at a private dinner held in the honour of Sir John Pender. This speech, which was critical of the government, was widely

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26 Memo. on the division of staff and administrative duties of the Army at Headquarters, Wolseley, 31 Dec. 1887, WOP W18/25

27 Brackenbury to Grove, 2 July 1888; Grove to Brackenbury, 3 July 1888, Stanhope Papers, 0259

28 Memo. on the defence of England, 17 April 1888, WO33/48

reported. The row it caused between Wolseley, the Duke of Cambridge, the Queen and the government has been described elsewhere. Despite Salisbury's statement that it would 'be absolutely not only insane, but treacherous' to discuss matters of home defence in a public forum, Wolseley felt put upon to provide a defence of his conduct in the House of Lords. On 14 May he repeated his comments on Britain's vulnerability to invasion in his maiden speech in the Lords. As a result of this debate on 29 June the Earl of Wemyss placed a motion on the table for the subject to be debated further. Forewarned, Lord George Hamilton sought to brief Salisbury on what Hamilton called the 'bogus invasion scare' before the debate began.[29] In this debate the controversy between the War Office and the Admiralty centred not on the wider issue of responsibility for defence but on the narrower issue of the feasibility of the scheme. It became a conflict on the quantity of tonnage required to transport an invading army. Wolseley argued that ample shipping was always available in the French Channel ports, whereas Lord George Hamilton argued that ships would have to be moved from the Mediterranean ports thereby giving Britain ample warning of French intentions and alerting the fleet. The conflict between the two sides was further complicated by the fact that Wolseley sat in the House of Lords and Hamilton in the Commons. Much to the Salisbury government's relief after the public debate in the House of Lords on invasion and the statement by Lord George Hamilton in the Commons the differences of opinion between the War Office and the Admiralty were voiced in private.

Wolseley had publicised his differences with the Admiralty over the feasibility of invasion and consequently Stanhope asked the Intelligence Department to prepare a memorandum on the subject of a French invasion. In its memorandum of 8 June the Intelligence Department appears to have given more credence to Wolseley's figures rather than those supplied by the Admiralty. It was estimated that it would take the French nine days to have five corps fully mobilised and concentrated on the north west coast of France. However, it was also pointed out that since the peace strength of the French Army was about 480,000 men, 100,000 of them could be concentrated at the Channel ports without any general mobilisation having been declared. On the

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29 11 May 1888, 14 May 1888 Hansard, Vol. CCCXXVI; 29 June 1888, Vol. CCCXXVII; Hamilton to Salisbury, 29 June 1888, Salisbury Papers

tonnage issue Brackenbury estimated that the requirements were one ton per man, 2½ per horse and five tons per carriage. Therefore 100,000 men, 10,000 horses and 300 guns would require 130,000 tons gross. Taking the total gross tonnage of the French mercantile marine, and allowing for the fact that only one fifth of it was in home ports at any one time, the tonnage available was ample to embark 150,000 men and the requisite number of horses, carriages, and guns in one trip.[30] The Admiralty figures of the tonnage required for 75,000 men plus horses, guns and carriages were 172,500 tons gross. In reply to the question on where invasion was most likely to occur, Brackenbury opted for the Sussex coast and noted that 'I am not aware that the Admiralty have undertaken the responsibility of watching the approach of an expedition'.[31]

Wolseley's arguments during the debates in the House of Lords had raised Salisbury's suspicions on Britain's vulnerability to invasion and on 29 June Salisbury asked the War Office to examine how the French Army would prepare for invasion, to produce complete plans for the defence of London and the mobilisation of troops for this purpose, to consider the proposal for the creation of a coast defence corps, and to plan for the destruction of railways should the invading army gain a firm bridgehead. The Admiralty was asked to produce plans for the rapid mobilisation of the reserve fleet to counter the invading force should some disaster have befallen the Navy, and to examine the feasibility of removing navigation buoys in the threatened area once the invading armada was on its way.[32]

The War Office reacted swiftly and produced an extremely detailed memorandum on the effective measures to be taken in case of apprehended invasion. This covered all aspects of mobilisation including the raising of more men by calling on former regular and auxiliary soldiers to re-enlist, and plans for military control of the railways.[33] On 16 July Ardagh produced another memorandum that formed the basis of plans for the defence of London for the rest of the century. He outlined three means of strengthening the defence of London: augmenting the Navy; increasing the military forces in the area; and erecting works of defence. Cost was a primary concern:

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30 Memo. on a French Invasion, 8 June 1888, WOP W18/38
31 Memo. by W.J.L. Wharton, Admiralty, 18 June 1888, CAB37/21; Wolseley to Hamilton, 8 & 9 June 1888, WPP PLB1
32 Memo. on French invasion, 29 June 1888, CAB37/21; 6 Nov. 1888, CAB37/22
33 Memo. on the defence of England, 6 July 1888, WOP W19

Ardagh suggested figures of three million pounds to build and maintain a modern warship, £60 per regular soldier per annum, £12 per annum for a Militiaman, and £4 per annum for a Volunteer. Therefore he concluded

> that the most economical way of giving adequate security to London is to supplement the force of the defenders by permanent works of fortification... [and] to acquire at important strategical points around London plots of land of just sufficient extent to afford sites for these storm-proof batteries which we have described, and upon these sites to carry into execution only the absolute minimum of work requisite to give them security against assault by the simplest of all physical obstacles - a ditch, and cover against the fire of the enemy by a rampart...

Two rings of defences were planned: one to cover the outer approaches to London along the North Downs to the south, and the high ground north of London, and an inner line corresponding approximately with the present South and North Circular Roads. The estimated cost would be £480,000, which could be spread over a number of years.[34]

Ardagh's memorandum met with a mixed response. The Admiralty and navalists were totally hostile to the idea that the Royal Navy alone could not defend Britain against invasion. But Wolseley, Buller, and the Duke all warmly supported Ardagh's scheme, arguing in a series of memoranda that while they accepted that the Navy should be the main bulwark against invasion 'we believe that our naval supremacy may be paralysed if, on account of the insecurity of the capital, public opinion demands the retention of our fleets at home as our only security against invasion'. Therefore it was essential that 'London must be defended by an active army in the first line, and a second line in strong position'. Furthermore the plans must be drawn up quickly since 'already villas and villages have occupied some of the best points for defence on the great chalk ridge', and this problem was only likely to get worse as London's suburbs grew.[35]

Wolseley had successfully raised the spectre of a foreign invasion to force the government to take the issue seriously. Useful plans were drawn up for the defence of Britain and London, and Stanhope was allocated £600,000 for fixed defences around London. The whole line of

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34 Memo. on the defence of London, 16 July 1888, WO33/48

35 Memo. on the defence of London, 9 Nov. 1888; 12 Nov. 1888; 22 Nov. 1888. All CAB37/20; 21 Nov. 1888, Stanhope Papers, 0232/2. Two notable military men, Sir Edward Hamley and G.S. Clarke, opposed the system of permanent fortifications largely on the grounds of cost. E. Hamley, 'The Defencelessness of London', Nineteenth Century, Vol. XXIII, No. 135, (April 1888); G.S. Clarke, My Working Life, (London 1898) p45-6. Wood and Butler also recorded the problems encountered in finding suitable sites. Wood, Midshipman, Vol. II, p188; W. Butler, An Autobiography, (London 1911) p355

fortifications was surveyed and plans drawn up for the defence works but few were ever built. Those that were built were usually little more than extensions to existing military buildings, for example Tilbury Fort and Warley. The long-term legacy of the work of Wolseley and Ardagh was the construction of 60 'Stanhope storehouses' which proved of great use during the mobilisation for the Boer War.[36]

One feature of the debates over Britain's vulnerability to invasion was the revelation of the apparently irreconcilable differences between the Admiralty and the War Office. As Wolseley pointed out to the members of the Hartington Commission in 1889: 'The Admiralty, to my recollection since I have had anything to do with the War Office, have never conceded anything, no matter how small, to us'.[37] The government attempted to rectify the situation by setting up a number of inter-departmental committees but these achieved little. For example, the Landing Places Committee met eleven times between 1891 and 1894 and served only to exacerbate the differences between the Admiralty and the War Office. In 1894 its report concluded that there was no need for such a committee to exist since an enemy could not get past the Navy to land on Britain's shores.[38] The Joint Naval and Military Committee set up in 1891 met with little more success. This attempted to solve the problem of how military and mercantile ports were to be defended, and tried to differentiate between the responsibilities of the naval and the military commanders of a port or harbour. The general conclusion was that the Navy should be responsible for everything that floated, such as torpedo boats, and the Army responsible for fixed defences such as shore guns. Nevertheless there was scope for disagreement here too. Wolseley pointed out that the interests of the two services could differ when, for example, the naval officer in charge saw a need to take his boats out of harbour to assist in a local naval battle thereby leaving the defence of the ports wholly reliant on military resources.[39] The issue was never really resolved to anyone's satisfaction.

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[36] Beckett, 'Stanhope at the War Office'

[37] Evidence given to the Hartington Commission, Q.77

[38] Correspondence between the Admiralty and the War Office on the invasion issue can be found in ADM1/7046; Report of the Landing Places Committee, 15 Oct. 1894, WO33/54. This must provide one of the few examples of a committee voting itself out of existence.

[39] Memo. on Instructions to General Officers Commanding for drawing up Schemes of Defence for Fortresses, Wolseley, June 1887, ADM1/6888

The invasion debates also had another unforeseen consequence: the Navy fought back and created its own doctrine of home and imperial defence. Four days after Wolseley's speech on invasion in the House of Lords, Vice-Admiral Philip Colomb presented a paper at the Royal United Services Institute. He argued that all that was necessary for Britain to be secure from invasion was an enlarged Navy. With more ships the fleet would be able to achieve the multitude of tasks it would face in time of war as well as defend Britain against invasion. In his opinion the role of the Army was to undertake limited operations in naval interests such as the defence of coaling stations abroad. This lecture has been viewed by some commentators such as Marder and Kennedy as the launching point of the Blue Water school of thought.[40] This school called for large battle fleets and a large number of smaller ships to maintain a close blockade of the enemy coast. In 1890 A.T. Mahan published The Influence of Sea Power on History and in 1892 The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and the Empire. Both books were well received within naval circles. While Wolseley disputed Colomb's theories he believed that 'Mahan's books have done the country, and the Navy for that matter too, a world of good'. But he remained wedded to his idea that the Army had a greater role to play than that assigned to it by the Navy.[41]

It remains to be seen whether Britain was ever seriously threatened with invasion, or whether Wolseley merely exaggerated the threat in an attempt to force the politicians to find a solution to the manpower crisis. Despite Boulanger's bellicose statements there appears to be no evidence that France produced any plans for an offensive against Britain during the 1880s, however, the threat of invasion did affect policy in other areas. For example, in 1888 Salisbury wrote to Baring urging caution in Egyptian affairs because the French

> already, I am told, look upon a war with England as the cheapest of the three alternatives open to them. They are so unreasonable, and have so much incurable hatred of England, that I should dread any very glaring exhibition of our sovereignty in Egypt at this moment.[42]

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40 A.J. Marder, British Naval Policy 1880-1905 (London 1941); P. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery, (London 1983)

41 Spiers, Late Victorian Army p 229; Wolseley to Maurice, March 1897, in Life of Wolseley p285

42 Salisbury to Baring, 17 Feb. 1888, in Lady G. Cecil, The Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury (London 1932), Vol. IV p 95

In February 1889 Wolseley endorsed this sentiment, fearing war with France over Egypt because Boulanger now headed the new French government.[43]

If, as has been argued in this chapter, Wolseley created the invasion scare in order to highlight the manpower crisis within the home army, then there is one area, the auxiliary forces, to which Wolseley should have paid more attention than he did. The 1886 mobilisation plan assigned a vital role to the Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry yet all three branches of the auxiliary forces were badly under-officered, below establishment, and ill-equipped. Wolseley was well aware of the poor state of the auxiliary forces. He spent time speaking at dinners of Volunteer or Militia regiments encouraging them to improve their marksmanship, and to relieve the regulars in areas such as signalling. But Wolseley made few further proposals to improve the efficiency of the auxiliary forces other than pressing for the money to train the auxiliary forces in the areas they would be called upon to defend in case of invasion. He was unsuccessful in this area. The result of government and War Office neglect of the auxiliary forces was that until Haldane's reforms the auxiliary forces were of very limited use militarily, although they did serve the secondary purpose of making soldiering a more acceptable profession within society.[44]

Wolseley achieved a notable success in the area of home defence when he successfully agitated against the construction of the Channel tunnel. His victory was largely due to the support he received from the Duke, Childers, and the press. Wolseley's role and achievements in the invasion scares is far harder to assess. He succeeded in raising public and political awareness of Britain's vulnerability to invasion, but it must be admitted that work in this direction had been begun by W.T. Stead's article on the Navy in 1884 in the Pall Mall Gazette.[45] Wolseley's speeches in the House of Lords did make it impossible for the government to ignore the issue. With Stanhope's support Wolseley was able to delegate the task of preparing military defensive plans for Britain and London to his able subordinate Ardagh. Yet although Wolseley had raised public awareness of the invasion threat the army received little benefit: the home establishment was not increased; there was no rush to join the auxiliary forces; and only £600,000 was voted for

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43 Wolseley to Cambridge, 18 Feb. 1889, RA E/1/12394
44 I.F.W. Beckett, Riflemen Form, (Aldershot 1982); The Amateur Military Tradition, (Manchester 1991)
45 Kennedy, p178

fortifications around London. The Navy, however, benefited greatly: it received £21,500,000 for the construction of new ships under the 1889 Naval Defence Act, and a further £30,250,000 in the 1894 Spencer programme.[46] The invasion debates revealed important differences between the military and naval plans for home defence. Despite governmental attempts to draw the two sides together, naval and military policy continued on different paths throughout the period Wolseley served at the War Office. Indeed the disagreement was so deeply rooted that it was not until the eve of the First World War that the army could be sure that the Admiralty would spare the ships necessary to transport the British Expeditionary Force to France.[47]

It appears therefore that Wolseley achieved very little in the area of home defence apart from blocking the construction of the Channel Tunnel. Home defence would become important again while Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief, when pressure was put on the government to supply the funds for defensive works, and when, during the Second Boer War, the British Army was away in South Africa and Britain lay open to invasion. These issues will be examined in the following chapter.

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46 Beckett, 'Stanhope at the War Office'
47 Committee of Imperial Defence, 114th meeting, 23 Aug. 1911, CAB2/2

Chapter 8 - Commander-in-Chief

Wolseley's period as Commander-in-Chief has been the subject of much criticism. His contemporaries predicted that his appointment would inaugurate a great period of army reform and were greatly disappointed. For example, Buller wrote to Campbell-Bannerman in 1899 that 'the old Duke seems to have outstayed Lord Wolseley, who has either got office where he is when he is no longer the man he was, or else he was never the man I thought him'.[1] Other contemporaries echoed these doubts. Lyttelton suggested that 'Wolseley was not the man he had been', and Amery made the point which has been repeated by later commentators that 'unfortunately the appointment came some ten years too late'.[2] Wolseley had never been known for his tact and diplomacy and the circumstances under which he was appointed as Commander-in-Chief, and the important alterations made to that post by the Order in Council of November 1895, led to friction between Wolseley, the Secretary of State for War Lord Lansdowne, and the Adjutant General Buller. In addition Wolseley was seriously ill early in 1897 and Lyttelton and Brodrick have both drawn attention to the difficulties caused by Wolseley's failing memory and frequent absences from the War Office.

In the light of these criticisms Wolseley's period as Commander-in-Chief needs re-examination. It is necessary to look at what Wolseley hoped to achieve, what he failed to do, and discuss the reasons behind any failure. Wolseley began his term of office on an optimistic note, setting out his plans for the future in his first public speech as Commander-in-Chief at a banquet given by the Clothworkers' Company in London in November 1895:

> It will be my one great object to make Her Majesty's Army a real fighting machine, ready to be used for whatever purpose the nation, through Parliament, may require of it. It will be my endeavour to make Her Majesty's Army a career for all ranks belonging to it, so that men may feel inducements to enter it, either as officers or soldiers, feeling sure that they shall have even-handed justice meted out to them, and that the men belonging to the Army, no matter to what rank they belong, shall have the same opportunity and the same certainty of advancement,

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[1] Buller to Campbell-Bannerman, 5 Jan. 1899, BM 41212

[2] Gen. Sir N. Lyttelton, Eighty Years Soldiering, Politics, Games, (London 1927) p170; Amery, Times History, Vol. 2, p23

> provided they bring to their work the ability which would raise them in other professions in life.[3]

He went on to place great emphasis on the education of the army, both in military skills and in the provision of skills which would be of purpose in civil life. These aims were perhaps predictable but naturally needed financial and political support to be put into practice. This chapter will examine the degree to which such support was forthcoming. It will end with the outbreak of the Second Boer War which will be considered in the following chapter.

It must be remembered that there was absolutely no guarantee that Wolseley would ever succeed the Duke of Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief. After the publication of the Hartington Report, with its recommendation of the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief, the Duke seriously considered resignation. The Queen, however, placated him and the Cabinet ended the matter by agreeing not to install a Chief of the Staff as a replacement for the Commander-in-Chief. In 1895 circumstances had changed. The Secretary of State for War, Campbell-Bannermen, was well aware that the Duke's ability to continue in office was fading and that his Adjutant General, Buller, was doing most of the work. Throughout May and June pressure was put on the Duke to retire from office. He fought a long and hard battle against it using his family connection with the Queen to retain his position. In the event it was the Queen herself, realising that there was no political support for the Duke, who persuaded him to retire.[4]

The question of the Duke's successor at first seemed to be a simple one; Campbell-Bannerman wanted Buller. Since, to Campbell-Bannerman's surprise, Wolseley had not bombarded the War Office with proposals for reform while he was Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, Campbell-Bannerman assumed that Wolseley had lost interest in army reform and no longer considered himself a serious candidate for the post of Commander-in-Chief of the British Army.[5] Roberts was easily dismissed as a candidate because of his lack of knowledge of British military affairs. The Duke of Connaught, whom the Queen expected to be appointed, was seen as too inexperienced, and given the Duke of Cambridge's abuse of his royal connections while in

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3 The Times, 7 Nov. 1895
4 Cambridge to Queen, 4 May 1895; Queen to Cambridge, 19 May 1895, both in Verner, p395-6; Buller to Campbell-Bannerman, 6 June 1895, BM 41212; Bigge to Campbell-Bannerman, 21 May 1895, BM 41206
5 Campbell-Bannerman to Wolseley, 25 Nov. 1892, WPP

office, there was a general unwillingness in political circles for another royal appointment. Therefore on 16 June the Queen telegraphed her private secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge, that she approved of Buller's appointment. Shortly afterwards the Liberal government fell from office and Salisbury formed a ministry and appointed Lord Lansdowne as the Secretary of State for War.[6]

Wolseley had remained largely unaware of the machinations for the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge and the appointment of Buller. It was only in July that he was made fully aware of the danger to his future plans and began his battle for the post of Commander-in-Chief. He wrote to Ardagh on 12 July, 'The blow nearly stunned me, for to be sent about one's business five years earlier than even the ordinary general is retired at, and to be superseded by one of the lieutenants whom I myself created, is treatment I never contemplated as possible... There has been some intrigue at work that I cannot fathom'.[7] A few days later he wrote to Wood on similar lines, again suspecting a conspiracy against him:

> I don't envy the feelings or conscience of the junior comrade who consents at this juncture to be put over my head. But then all men do not look at such points of honour in the old fashioned fashion that I have always felt for the few men who in my early life helped me up some of the difficult rungs of life's ladder.[8]

Wolseley felt that he had been intentionally led to believe that the Duke of Connaught would succeed the Duke of Cambridge and this was why Wolseley had accepted the offer of the post of ambassador to Germany. He accepted that if the Duke of Connaught became Commander-in-Chief he would never then, on the grounds of age, hold that post himself but he accepted that the Queen's son held precedence. As he bitterly told Salisbury 'My only object in proposing Berlin was to make it easier for you to pass me over had you intended to make H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught Commander-in-Chief, having learnt on good authority that I was the main difficulty in the way of that arrangement'.[9]

Wolseley felt cheated; he believed he had a right to be Commander-in-Chief. He could tolerate the appointment of the Duke of Connaught but not of Buller. Buller himself was aware of

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6 Queen to Bigge, 16 June 1895, Buckle, Vol. 2, 3rd series, p519
7 Wolseley to Ardagh, 5 & 12 July 1895, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/2
8 Wolseley to Wood, 11 July 1895, Duke University
9 Salisbury to Lansdowne, 5 Aug. 1895 in Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne, (London 1929), p131; Wolseley to Salisbury, August 1895, in Life of Wolseley, p277

this problem. He wrote to Campbell-Bannerman in June 1895 that 'I feel my appointment to such a post would possibly pain Lord Wolseley', and that his loyalty to Wolseley would cause him to refuse any offer of the post. He went on to say 'I think moreover that you may not have quite taken into consideration, that I have never really been tried as a head man - personally I am always inclined to think myself a better second fiddle than a leader of thought'.[10] Once in office Wolseley never forgot what he considered to be Buller's disloyalty in 1895 and this coloured the relations between the two men. In order to try and improve matters Buller wrote to Campbell-Bannerman asking for a copy of the letter quoted above because Wolseley 'has got it into his head that I had plotted against him behind his back, and had tried to supplant him in what he held to be his birth right'. Unfortunately for Buller he got the date wrong asking Campbell-Bannerman for a letter written in June 1897 instead of 1895 with the result that Campbell-Bannerman could not find the letter and Buller could not placate Wolseley.[11]

The Queen considered that the fall of the Liberal government was a perfect opportunity for her to advance the claims of the Duke of Connaught again. On 4 August Lansdowne wrote to Salisbury that it had never occurred to him to consider the Duke of Connaught as a candidate.[12] On the 6 August Ardagh wrote a memorandum outlining the relative merits of the candidates arguing that the Duke of Cambridge favoured Buller because he had less talent than Wolseley:

> He would like to have Buller too because he believes he would not go too fast, and would have things as they are, until the Duke of Connaught is ripe to step into his shoes: whereas he apprehends that Wolseley would make it evident that the army could be successfully commanded, and greatly improved without a Royalty at its head.[13]

On the following day Lansdowne wrote to the Queen formally recommending Wolseley for the post of Commander-in-Chief. He ignored the Queen's objections that Wolseley had promised to go to Berlin and stated categorically that political and military opinion was adamant that the Duke of Connaught was too inexperienced for the post. Telegrams continued to pass between the government, the Queen, and the Kaiser on the subject until finally on 17 August the Queen

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10 Buller to Campbell-Bannerman, 18 June 1895, BM 41212
11 Buller to Campbell-Bannerman, 28 June 1899, ibid.; Lyttelton, p169
12 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 4 Aug. 1895 in Life of Wolseley, p276
13 Memo. by Ardagh, 6 Aug. 1895, PRO30/40/13

telegraphed Lansdowne 'I sanction Wolseley's appointment, but I do not think it a good one'.[14] The appointment was made public on 19 August.

On 9 August Wolseley had replied to Lansdowne's telegram asking him whether he would prefer to be Commander-in-Chief or go to Berlin, that he would prefer to be Commander-in-Chief 'always assuming that there will be no material alterations in the position'. Lansdowne replied the following day that there would be changes on the lines of Campbell-Bannerman's statement to the House of Commons.[15] The next section of this chapter will tackle the subject of the position of the Commander-in-Chief under the new rules and then go on to describe how this affected both the relations between Wolseley and Lansdowne and the state of the British Army.

The principal reason behind the recommendation of the Hartington Commission for the abolition of the office of the Commander-in-Chief was that it was felt that the Commander-in-Chief had too much power concentrated in his hands, and that he was so overloaded with work that important areas such as the preparation of plans of war and of defence were often overlooked. This is why Campbell-Bannerman drafted an Order-in-Council reorganising the internal departments of the War Office and made these changes public in a speech to the House of Commons on 21 June. Under the new rules the Commander-in-Chief's functions would be greatly modified. The Commander-in-Chief was to be the 'principal adviser of the Secretary of State' but associated with him were to be four other military heads of department each 'directly responsible to the Secretary of State'.[16] The Military Secretary and the Director of Intelligence would report to the Commander-in-Chief. Responsibility for the discipline of the army was to be given to the Adjutant General. All heads of department would meet in a new Army Board under the presidency of the Commander-in-Chief to discuss questions raised either by one of the members or by the

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[14] Lansdowne to Queen, 7 August 1895 in Buckle, Vol. 2, 3rd series, p545-6; further letters between the Government and the Queen in Buckle, ibid., p 546-53; Queen to Lansdowne, 17 Aug. 1895 in Newton, p133

[15] Wolseley to Lansdowne, 9 Aug. 1895, Lansdowne to Wolseley, 10 Aug. 1895 both in Newton, p132; Campbell-Bannerman speech in House of Commons, 21 June 1895, Hansard, Vol. XXIV

[16] The four heads of department were the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Inspector General of Fortifications, and the Inspector General of Ordnance.

Secretary of State. On taking office Lansdowne proposed to follow much the same format laid down by Campbell-Bannerman and made this public in the House of Lords on 26 August.[17]

Wolseley was stunned by the proposals put forward by Lansdowne. He was aware that with the title of Commander-in-Chief the public would hold him responsible for the efficiency of the army and would not understand that the Order in Council had devolved this responsibility to the Army Board. Wolseley wrote to Lansdowne suggesting 'a few emendations' which he felt were of vital importance. He wanted the phrase 'and shall be responsible for their fighting efficiency' inserted in the duties of the Commander-in-Chief. He also recommended a return to the old phrasing of the Adjutant General's duties, he 'is charged with the discipline' etc., instead of the new phrasing making the Adjutant General responsible for the discipline of the army. Remembering the financial battles which had so often thwarted Wolseley's attempts at reform in the past he suggested that the Accountant-General should be made a member of the Army Board.[18] These recommendations seemed quite reasonable since it is evident that the commander of an army should be held responsible for the efficiency of that army and not merely be considered the administrative head which the practical implementation of the Order in Council would imply.

As ever when joining battle against the politicians Wolseley sought allies from among his friends. He wrote to Wood in September 1895:

> It would be a matter of the first consequence to the army that we soldiers should hold together to try to guide the new Order in Council to run in military grooves. The one great point I shall make is that, you cannot sever Command from the responsibility for fighting efficiency, nor can you hold anyone responsible for the latter if he is not made, in some way or another, responsible for the discipline of that army... I want to state that the Commander-in-Chief is to be "responsible for the fighting efficiency of the army": and that in detailing the Adjutant General's duties we should insert that he is responsible for the maintenance of discipline "under the Regulations then in force" or words to that effect.

He reminded Wood that it was in his and Buller's interests to support Wolseley in this struggle to amend the Order in Council because one of them might succeed him as Commander-in-Chief after Wolseley's five year term had been completed.[19] In contrast Wolseley's great ally, Ardagh, who

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17 Draft Order in Council relative to the War Department, Campbell-Bannerman, June 1895, WO33/56; Changes consequent upon the retirement of the HRH the Duke of Cambridge, Lansdowne, 12 Aug. 1895, CAB37/40

18 Wolseley to Lansdowne, Aug. 1895, in Life of Wolseley, p278

19 Wolseley to Wood, 15 Sept. 1895, Duke University

had done so much to secure Wolseley the post of Commander-in-Chief, held a very different opinion. He was in favour of a reduction of the powers of the Commander-in-Chief and, in a memorandum to Lansdowne, urged that 'the Head Quarter Staff collectively under the Adjutant General should be empowered to press their views and practically overrule the Commander-in-Chief in the War Office Council'.[20] Despite Wolseley's appeals for greater powers Lansdowne refused to amend the Order in Council immediately, preferring to wait and see how it operated in practice.

Hamer has quite correctly interpreted the key to the poor relations between Lansdowne and Wolseley as the dispute over the meaning of the terms 'limited responsibility' and 'general supervision'.[21] Wolseley was adamant that his heads of department should not have direct access to the Secretary of State, because this implied 'limited responsibility'. Nor did he feel that he could carry out 'general supervision' if he did not always know what his heads of department were doing. The drive towards the reform of the army needed a leader, but subjecting the actions of individual heads of department to the 'general supervision' of the Commander-in-Chief when presiding over meetings of the Army Board put Wolseley in the position of a commentator or a referee and not a leader. There was the danger that by the time issues were raised at the Army Board one or more heads of department might have already gone too far in a direction which suited their purposes but which Wolseley might not view as in the best interests of the efficiency of the army as a whole.

At first Wolseley did his best to circumvent the regulations. He ensured that the heads of department knew of his dissatisfaction with the regulations and tried to institute a new procedure whereby he would be consulted on the actions of the heads of department before any proposals were presented directly by them to the Secretary of State. For example, Wood recalled in his autobiography that Wolseley ordered him to address him on any matters he wished to put to the Secretary of State. The result was that Lansdowne minuted papers to Wood but received them back through Wolseley.[22] Lansdowne detested this practice. The P.U.S. R.H. Knox was well

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[20] Memo. on the Commander-in-Chief, Ardagh, 6 Aug. 1895, PRO30/40/13
[21] Hamer, p170
[22] Wood, p251

aware of the difficulties created by Wolseley's and Lansdowne's opposing reactions to the Order in Council and sought Campbell-Bannerman's advice on the subject. Campbell-Bannerman replied that he felt that 'the real difficulty is to combine independence with co-operation'. The Army Board was the best solution but 'I suspect the Viscount and the two V.C.'s are rather too many lions in one cage'.[23] He was right: personal relations were the key to the whole question. The members of the Army Board were at, or near the peak of their careers, had known each other for a number of years, and consequently battled for supremacy, scoring against each other rather than pulling together to produce an efficient army.

Wolseley identified another problem in the War Office administration as he complained to Butler, then in South Africa: 'We are doing little here: I struggle to get the army into fighting efficiency, but it is no easy work under present conditions. More and more the W.O. clerk is becoming the real ruler of the army, and views and objects are less and less paid attention to'.[24] Knox was aware of the problem and told Campbell-Bannerman that the soldiers were very 'restive,' seeking greater financial control. He also feared the consequences of poor personal relations in the War Office saying that 'Lord Lansdowne is so weak and Mr W[yndham] so sympathising that I fear we shall go to the wall'.[25] The battle against the War Office clerk and the Finance Department over the expansion of the army and the provision of up to date armament will be examined later in this chapter.

In an article for the National Review in January 1897 Spenser Wilkinson made public the damage done to the cause of army reform by the problematic organisation of the War Office. He argued that the politicians had selected Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief and then 'put him in a strait-waistcoat of a civilian war-office and of a council of his own subordinates. Such conditions would paralyse a Napoleon, and if the country cares for its military defences, means will be found to untie Lord Wolseley's hands'. Wilkinson believed that the simplest solution would be for Wolseley to sign a statement appended to the Estimates each year signalling his agreement with

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23 Campbell-Bannerman to Knox, 2 Jan. 1897, BM 41221
24 Wolseley to Butler, 8 Feb. 1899, National Library of Ireland, 15,997
25 Knox to Campbell-Bannerman, 18 Oct. 1899, BM 41221

them as the First Sea Lord did in the Admiralty.[26] This was by no means a new proposal and had been advocated by others such as Dilke many years before. It was as politically unacceptable now as then. Lansdowne refused to accept the premise that his decisions were subject to the approval of a non-politician, to him to suggest otherwise would be to undermine parliamentary authority.

The Queen was also disquieted by stories emanating from the War Office of the unworkability of the 1895 Order in Council. In February 1899 she seized the opportunity provided by the need to amend the Order in Council when the ordnance factories were brought under military control. She suggested to Salisbury that the Order in Council might be changed 'with a view of re-establishing the position of the Commander-in-Chief, especially with regard to the discipline of the Army... He ought not to be a head of a department, but the Supreme Military Chief responsible to the Sovereign (the head of the Army) for its military, as opposed to its civil, administration'. In March Bigge wrote to Wolseley that the Queen wished Wolseley to visit Salisbury to argue his case. Wolseley did so, but as Salisbury wrote to the Queen on 10 March, 'Lord Lansdowne appears to have conceded the substance of Lord Wolseley's wish, but to resist as to the embodiment of that concession in a change of the Order in Council'. He continued to say that Lansdowne considered the matter serious enough to threaten resignation, which Salisbury wanted to avoid since there was the danger that Lansdowne's resignation would lead to the departure of other Liberal Unionists and to a political crisis. Lansdowne had agreed that Wolseley should be consulted on matters of discipline by the Adjutant General but pointed out that in any case Wolseley had always been consulted on the most serious cases. In May the Queen abandoned her campaign but she wrote a memorandum to Lansdowne 'The Queen has been unable to modify her views upon this important subject. Her Majesty will, however, no longer press these, but desires that this memorandum may be officially recorded at the War Office'.[27] This was to prove a victory for Wolseley. During the in-fighting between the civil and military side of the War Office after the disasters of the Boer War Wolseley knew that he could depend on royal support on the

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[26] H.S. Wilkinson, War and Policy, (New York 1900) p295. This book was a compilation of Wilkinson's articles which first appeared in the National Review between October 1895 and December 1897.
[27] Queen to Salisbury, 9 Feb. 1899; Wolseley to Queen, 8 March 1899; Queen to Salisbury & Salisbury to Queen, 10 March 1899; Lansdowne to Salisbury, 23 March 1899; memo. by Queen, 15 May 1899, all in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, pp340-65

subject of the responsibilities of the Commander-in-Chief. This dispute will be examined in the next chapter.

Spiers has suggested that 'Lord Wolseley, in effect, largely equated army increase with army reform. He believed that the army had already been reformed, that the structure was basically sound, and that the home battalions would become efficient if only the necessary increases were sanctioned'.[28] There is a good deal of truth in this opinion: Wolseley was firmly wedded to the Cardwell principle of maintaining a parity between the number of battalions at home and abroad, but he was prepared to put forward proposals to make this system more elastic. The opening shot in the renewed campaign to increase the size of the army was fired on 25 January 1896 by the D.M.I. Major-General Edward Chapman. He wrote a memorandum for Wolseley in which he urged Wolseley to undertake a new survey of the military requirements of the Empire and the purpose of the army as he had done in June 1888. This had led to the Stanhope Memorandum in December of that year. In this memorandum Chapman made a preliminary survey of the requirements and concluded that an addition of 12 infantry battalions and more field artillery were essential to the provision of two efficient Army Corps. He also pointed out that the increase in the size of the army would necessitate the erection of new barracks and store houses and the supply of additional equipment.[29]

Wolseley anticipated opposition to these proposals if only on the grounds of cost. Therefore he wrote a very comprehensive memorandum in February 1896 setting out the reasoning behind his proposals for a major increase to the size of the army. He reminded Lansdowne that in 1888 he had asked for an addition of eleven battalions of infantry, seven batteries of artillery and other miscellaneous additions totalling an additional 23,000 men to be added to the establishment. Little had been done since and 'I am not aware that since June 1888, any complete survey of our position as regards the personnel and the establishments generally of the Regular Army has been submitted for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government'. Wolseley's aim was to set down 'a full view of the extent to which the Regular Army can, and of

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28 Spiers, Army & Society, p229
29 Chapman to Wolseley, 25 Jan. 1896, M.O.D. Library, Military Policy 57

the extent to which it cannot, perform what have been laid down as its duties'. He summarised the requirements for garrisons in India and the colonies including Egypt, and concluded that a total of 102,680 men had to be maintained abroad. The home army was manifestly incapable of meeting the demand for trained drafts and had been only able to do so by 'a perpetual series of makeshifts, by transfers, by enlarged depots, by bounties, by robbing Peter to pay Paul, by the denudation of the home cadres, by a succession of struggles and expedients which combine to keep it in a weak and exhausted condition'. The Garrison Artillery had only 36 companies at home to feed 67 abroad; there were 76 battalions of infantry abroad fed by 65 at home; only the Cavalry and the Engineers were able to cope with the demand for drafts. He argued that the home army would be fit for home defence when the number of soldiers would be increased by the mobilisation of the Volunteers, Militia and Yeomanry but even then the artillery needed ten more batteries. Wolseley concluded that eleven new infantry battalions were required to balance the system and, if his recommendation to send two more battalions to the Cape was accepted, this number would be increased by four.[30]

The actuaries were asked to comment on Wolseley's proposals, and in July 1896 Lansdowne was informed that they would cost £2 million. Lansdowne therefore asked Wolseley to reconsider the number of battalions required and to investigate whether savings could be made in other branches of the army. Wolseley replied in October that whereas he was approaching the question from the military standpoint - what was needed - Lansdowne was approaching the question from the political and financial viewpoint - what Parliament thought the taxpayer would accept. He agreed on the need to make savings in other areas of the military establishment and, after a careful consideration of the demands on each arm, he recommended the reduction of two regiments of cavalry of the line, and a reorganisation of the Horse Artillery which would achieve an increase of two batteries but reduce the establishment by 156 men. But he remained adamant that the Field Artillery should be increased by a minimum of five batteries, the Garrison Artillery by 5,048 men, and the Infantry by 13 battalions. He also raised the controversial question, which

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30 Memo. on the efficiency of the Regular Army, Wolseley, 22 Feb. 1896, WO33/56

will be discussed later in this chapter, of the desirability of stationing some Guards battalions abroad.[31]

The memorandum was referred to the Army Board in December. This meeting showed that Wolseley's opinions were respected but not going to be accepted without reservation and indeed some opposition. The Board agreed to reduce one rather than two cavalry regiments, but it supported Wolseley's proposals on the Garrison Artillery, and agreed with Wolseley's argument that a total of 77 battalions were needed at home to feed the 77 abroad. The Board then dismissed Wolseley's appeal for an increase to the Horse Artillery and reduced his request for more Field Artillery to one battery. The Board recommended that one regiment of the Household Cavalry should be reduced and the men split between the remaining two and ignored Wolseley's opposition to this proposal. It watered down Wolseley's demand for 13 new infantry battalions by arguing that, if two new Guards battalions were raised and three sent abroad, the balance of infantry of the line at home and abroad would be reduced to 74 and consequently only 7 new infantry battalions would be needed.[32]

At this meeting of the Army Board, the first of any major consequence, its members had shown the independence of thought that Campbell-Bannerman and Lansdowne had hoped for when they were reorganising the War Office. The production of concrete proposals by a board rather than an individual strengthened Lansdowne's hand when approaching the Cabinet with the proposals for such a dramatic increase to the army. Consequently the Cabinet was more prepared to consider the proposals seriously and on 23 December Lansdowne was able to report back to the Army Board that he had succeeded in obtaining an increase of £120,000 to the 1897 Estimates, which meant that work on the improvement of the efficiency of the British Army could begin. This figure was a long way from the £2 million required to carry out all Wolseley's proposals but it was a move in the right direction and even Wolseley must have expected that the fruition of his plans would be spread over a number of years. Nevertheless the Army Board was disquieted by Lansdowne's report. The Board had planned to order a number of 10" and 9.2" guns to modernise

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31 Memo. on the increase to the establishment, Lansdowne, 10 July 1896; memo. on the increase to the army, Wolseley, 30 Oct. 1896, both in WO32/6357

32 Meeting of the Army Board, Dec. 1896, WO32/6357

the armament of the artillery but was informed that no new orders were to be issued although existing orders would be filled. This decision would have serious repercussions three years later in South Africa. Lyttelton wrote to the P.U.S. that the Army Board accepted the need for financial caution over the ordering of armaments but added that 'the Board considers that an increase in the personnel of the Army is the most pressing necessity of the moment' and one which the Cabinet had largely ignored.[33]

Although the Army Board was prepared to reconsider proposals made by Wolseley and to temper them with ideas of its own, the importance of Wolseley's role in the drive towards reform is amply illustrated by the events of 1897. By the end of 1896 both Lansdowne and the Cabinet had been convinced that substantial increases were needed to the army; the question remained of what, when and how much. The onus was therefore on the War Office to maintain the impetus. However, early in 1897 Wolseley became seriously ill and was forced to take a long absence from the War Office.[34] The burden of his work fell on the Adjutant General, Wood who, despite being a long-time ally of Wolseley in the cause of army reform, was manifestly incapable of pressing his mentor's proposals with the same drive that Wolseley brought to his battles. By September Wolseley was fully recovered and embarked on a tour of Britain where he made some inflammatory public speeches on the state of the army, which angered the politicians. The strongest of these was at Glasgow where he declared:

> Our Army machinery is overstrained and is out of gear. I speak in the presence of many whose technical knowledge will enable them to contradict me if I am wrong, when I say that, if a machine which is calculated to manufacture a certain amount of stuff annually has some 20 per cent. extra work forced upon it, the machine will, sooner or later certainly break down. Yet that is what we are risking with our Army... Our Army machinery is no longer able to meet effectively the demands now made upon it.[35]

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[33] Memo. on the strength of the army, Lansdowne, 4 Dec. 1896 in papers submitted to the Royal Commission on the military preparations for the War in South Africa, Elgin, c.1789-92, (1904) XL, XLI, XLII; memo. on the increase to the establishment, Lansdowne, 23 Dec. 1897; reply of the Army Board, 29 Dec. 1896, both in WO32/6357

[34] Wolseley contracted a throat infection which was then complicated by an attack of jaundice. Wolseley to Cambridge, 15 Jan. 1897, E/1/13220

[35] The Times, 23 Sept. 1897

Arnold-Forster recalled the outrage of the politicians when reading of this statement and recorded his own amazement that the Under Secretary for War, Brodrick, should have signalled his agreement with Wolseley's arguments.[36]

In November 1897 Wolseley wrote an interesting memorandum for Lansdowne. It contained a tactical error, an overview of the defence requirements of the British Empire, and a proposal which altered the basis of the Cardwell system of two battalion regiments. The tactical error was that Wolseley based his demands for an increase to the home army on the premise that three not two Army Corps should be formed entirely of regular troops, a plan which would require 75 battalions. Lansdowne promptly pointed out that there was no basis for any discussion of three Army Corps, that two was the number that had been accepted since the Stanhope Memorandum and that figure was to remain unchanged. In his survey of the requirements of the British Empire, Wolseley considered the subject of home defence in greater depth than the previous year. He pointed out that in the event of a war with France the two battalions stationed in the Channel Islands could not be removed and therefore should be deducted from the number of home battalions, and that in his opinion a further six battalions were necessary to defend London, Dublin and the southern coast, and therefore 83 battalions were needed at home. Since the increase to the Guards had been sanctioned 77 of these 83 battalions would be of the line. But the Colonial Defence Committee had asked for an extra battalion for Mauritius and another at Bermuda which meant that 81 battalions would be abroad since one was temporarily stationed on Crete. Three of the 80 battalions permanently abroad would come from the Guards leaving 77 to come from the line. The grand total of battalions needed at home and abroad was 154 whereas the establishment was only 142, consequently Wolseley pressed for 12 new battalions of infantry of the line.

In this memorandum Wolseley proposed a revision of the Cardwell and Childers system of the organisation of regiments. He argued that the addition of 12 new battalions would balance the existing system and 'will give an opportunity for largely extending the four battalion system which already exists in the Rifle Corps and Rifle Brigade. Every additional four battalion regiment increases our elasticity and our power of having more battalions abroad than at home'. It would

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36 Arnold-Forster, Army Letters, p5

also increase Britain's ability to send a small expeditionary force abroad without calling out the Reserves.[37] Lansdowne replied that a Bill was under preparation to add a requirement for some reservists to serve abroad in small wars and that he did not therefore consider that part of Wolseley's argument valid.[38] The subject of the Army Reserve in this period will be discussed later in this chapter. Lansdowne did however give his tentative approval to Wolseley's most radical proposal, for the extension of four battalion regiments. He set up a committee of Knox, Stopford and Wood to examine the question. The Army Board met on 2 December 1897 to consider the matter and while it was in favour of four battalion regiments it urged caution remembering the outcry over the establishment of linked battalions almost 20 years earlier.[39]

The approval of the principle of making the new infantry battalions part of existing regiments was timely because at the end of 1897 success was in sight. On 2 December Lansdowne outlined his proposals for the Cabinet; ten new battalions were to be created and the establishment of home battalions increased by 80 men.[40] The Cabinet assented to these proposals and in addition approved of the abolition of the stoppage for groceries, the abolition of deferred pay (which Wolseley had opposed) and the introduction of a messing allowance and a gratuity of £1 per year of service in place of deferred pay, and the introduction of a facility to allow discharged men to re-engage without refunding their deferred pay. As Salisbury informed the Queen 'The Army will be larger and better paid, and the Cardwell system will be rendered rather more elastic. But the Cardwell system remains still there'.[41]

It appeared that now that Parliament had voted an increase of 9,000 men to the army covering the additional battalions and the increase of seven batteries to the artillery Wolseley had achieved all his aims on the size of the army and had set up a system whereby the extra battalions could be absorbed into the organisation of the army with the least dislocation. However, inevitably perhaps, the Treasury fought back. Lansdowne wrote a strongly worded memorandum to the

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37 Memo. on the increase to the establishment, Wolseley, 3 Nov. 1897, WO32/6357
38 Memo. on the increase to the establishment, Lansdowne, 3 Nov. 1897, WO32/6357
39 Report of the committee on four battalion regiments, 30 Nov. 1897; meeting of the Army Board, 24 Dec. 1897, both in WO32/6357
40 Outline of army proposals, Lansdowne, 2 Dec. 1897, CAB37/45
41 Salisbury to Queen, 18 Dec. 1897 in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, pp212-3; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 1897, Life of Wolseley, p308

Cabinet commenting on the proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hicks Beach. The Chancellor wanted only six new battalions but Lansdowne argued that 'we are committed to the principle of equilibrium'. The reduction would be accepted by the War Office if the Colonial Secretary was prepared to announce in Parliament that the four battalions over establishment for South Africa but at present stationed there could be safely removed. He was quite safe in making this proviso knowing that the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain was highly unlikely to make any such statement for reasons to be examined in the following chapter. Lansdowne also noted that whereas the Army Board had asked for an addition of 100 men to each battalion of the home establishment, Lansdowne had reduced this to 80 and was not prepared to accept the Treasury's further reduction to 60. The Treasury also disputed the figures proposed by the War Office on the amount of deferred pay; Lansdowne pointed out that the adoption of the Treasury's proposals would send soldiers back into civil life with only £5, which was clearly an inadequate figure.[42] To Wolseley's dismay the Treasury succeeded in pressing some of its points. On 3 February 1898 Lansdowne informed the Army Board that recruiting could be opened for six new battalions: the decision on which regiments could raise new battalions was to be left to the discretion of the Army Board.[43] The establishment of home battalions was to be raised to 800 men, which demonstrated that Lansdowne had won over the Treasury on that point.

The addition of six new battalions of infantry of the line was the end result of the protracted battle between the War Office and the Treasury. It was in one sense a defeat for Wolseley since it represented a major reduction from the figure of 12 or 13 new battalions asked for in his memoranda. But it was a substantial increase and Wolseley was a pragmatist who would have expected the Treasury to produce vociferous opposition to his proposals. His proposals on the infantry had been halved but he had succeeded in winning a major though gradual augmentation of the artillery: for example, in 1897 seven new batteries of Horse Artillery were voted. Despite their differences over the interpretation and usefulness of the 1895 Order in Council, and their poor opinions of each other, Wolseley and Lansdowne had worked well together in the battle to

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42 Note on proposals made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the strength of the army, Lansdowne, 26 Jan. 1898, CAB37/46

43 Memo. on increase to establishment, Lansdowne, 3 Feb. 1898, WO32/6357

increase the size of the army. Indeed Lansdowne was so keen to press his proposals on the Cabinet that in February 1898 he again offered his resignation to Salisbury if his Cabinet colleagues would not support him. Spiers has argued that Lansdowne moved beyond the wishes of Wolseley and Haliburton with the increase of six new battalions to the army but the memoranda quoted above show that Wolseley was very much the leader in the battle for the increase.[44] Nevertheless it is true that Lansdowne was more forward than Wolseley in securing minor alterations, such as the abolition of stoppages, which it was thought would have a beneficial effect on recruitment. Recruitment was the next urgent problem facing the War Office.

The struggle to obtain a sufficient number of recruits to ensure the smooth working and the continuation of the short service system before Wolseley became Commander-in-Chief has already been discussed in an earlier chapter. It became clear that Wolseley believed that a sufficient number of suitable recruits would be forthcoming if the army were better paid. As Commander-in-Chief he pressed the same point. At a discussion of the military prize essays at the United Services Institute in 1898 Wolseley repeated his earlier opinions:

> I believe that the voluntary system, which has served us so long, will serve us still if we only adopt the common-sense idea about an article, viz., that if you want to buy an article you have to pay for it... As long as you make the Service popular with the people from whom you expect to get recruits you will be able to get as many as you want... With regard to the inducements that ought to be held out, I think, to a man to enlist, those inducements can be either in the shape of money, or they might be in the shape of employment when he leaves the Army.[45]

Lansdowne and Brodrick were to some extent in agreement with Wolseley's views. Brodrick noted during the debate on the Estimates in February 1898 that the army was forced to compete for men with the more popular Navy and that paying the soldier the same as the men were paid at Agincourt meant that the best men avoided the army. Lansdowne pointed out that the army sought 30,000 recruits annually, the Militia 35,000, the Volunteers and Yeomanry 42,000, and the Navy 15,000 and that therefore 'it is clear that we are severely taxing the recruiting capacity of the country'.[46] Therefore the War Office had to reconsider how it could compete with these other services for the best men.

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44 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 2 Feb. 1898 in Newton, p149; Spiers, Army & Society, p225
45 J.R.U.S.I. Vol. 41, (1898), pp25-45
46 Hansard, Vol. XXXVI, 25 Feb. 1898; memo. on army proposals, Lansdowne, 2 Dec. 1897, CAB37/45

Lansdowne dismissed Wolseley's appeal to increase the basic pay of the soldier. He argued that if the pay of the home army was increased then pressure would be brought to increase the pay of the soldier in India which would further strain the already stretched purses of the Indian taxpayer and be politically dangerous. In January 1898 Lansdowne suggested that an increase in the number of three year enlistments might provide a temporary solution to the recruiting crisis, as it had done in the Foot Guards in the 1880s. The Army Board replied that since these men would be ineligible for foreign service they should be considered supernumerary to the establishment.[47] It is apparent that Lansdowne was seeking a temporary solution to a fundamental problem for political reasons. Having secured a major increase to the army he needed to be able to announce in Parliament that the men had been found. He appeared to be less concerned with the efficiency or usefulness of these men, it was numbers that counted. In contrast the Army Board could see little point in a large number of three year enlistments. These soldiers would be ineligible for foreign service and would therefore not assist with the difficulties caused by the need to send large numbers of drafts to the army abroad. Nor would most of these men be efficient in time to be of any use in small wars which was again a major concern of the War Office. Therefore the Army Board placed more emphasis on the agreement to increase the establishment of all home battalions.

By May 1898 Lansdowne was made aware that a major recruiting crisis existed in the artillery, particularly in the Garrison Artillery. The Garrison Artillery was an unpopular arm of the service; the men were isolated in small garrisons spread throughout Great Britain and the Empire and faced little chance of seeing action. The problem of finding recruits was by no means a new one; since its separation from the Field Artillery in 1887 it had been under establishment in virtually every year. In 1898 this had reached crisis point when it was nearly 400 men under establishment. To rectify the situation Lansdowne wrote to Wolseley explaining that two expedients had been suggested to him, an example of how he received advice from his heads of department without prior reference to Wolseley. These expedients were that either cavalry

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47 Ibid.; memo. on short service, Lansdowne, 12 Jan. 1898; meeting of the Army Board, 24 Jan. 1898, both in WO32/6892

reservists should be encouraged to join the artillery, or that a special force of highly paid men should be recruited on long service specifically for garrison work.[48]

Wolseley's response was predictable. The cavalry reserve was needed for mobilisation and was not available for garrison work, and recruitment for the Garrison Artillery was poor because men expected financial compensation for the tedium of their work. He was particularly hostile to the proposal to raise a special long service force because 'I am against all attempts to revert to long service, and I gather that the germ of these proposals is of such a nature'.[49] Nearly 30 years after the introduction of short service and despite its confirmation in the report of the Wantage Committee Wolseley was still suspicious of any attempts to undermine the sanctity of the Cardwell system of short service. Wolseley also argued that the army had been subjected to a short period of intense reform and needed rest and was against any further 'experiments'. This is an example of the reformer turning conservative, as his predecessor had when similarly faced with a large number of radical proposals. Brodrick commented to Lansdowne that Wolseley appeared to have misunderstood the proposals. Wolseley believed that men were efficient up to 12 years service and therefore Brodrick could see no reason for Wolseley's opposition to the idea that these 12 years should be spent entirely in the colours under special terms of enlistment.[50] The Army Board was also prepared to discuss the question of the raising of a veteran corps of 5,000 men for the Garrison Artillery whereas Wolseley was isolated in his total opposition to the scheme. In a last ditch attempt to thwart the scheme Wolseley reminded Lansdowne that he had seen veteran corps in action in Canada back in the 1860s and had not been impressed.[51] But Wolseley forgot that the men to be recruited under Lansdowne's and the Army Board's scheme would be only between 30 and 40 years of age and still fit enough for the undemanding work of maintaining garrison fortresses. Wolseley did, however, make the valid point that the proposals were contrary to the government's attempts of the last 30 years to reduce the size of the pension list. The scheme was

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48 Lansdowne to Wolseley, 16 May 1898, WO32/6768
49 Wolseley to P.U.S., 7 June 1898, WO32/6768
50 Brodrick to Lansdowne, 13 June 1898
51 Meeting of the Army Board, 7 July 1898; Brodrick to Lansdowne, 18 July 1898; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 28 July 1898, all in WO32/6768

not put into practice and by 1899 the deficit in the Garrison Artillery establishment had risen to 549 men.

The question of the quality of recruits before 1895 has already been discussed in a previous chapter. It was soon apparent that the increase to the army of six battalions made the existing problems worse. At the end of 1898 Lansdowne reported to the Cabinet that three new battalions had been raised and three more were being recruited. He added that although many specials had been enlisted most reached the standard within a few months. Nevertheless he felt 'it cannot, however, be pretended that the present rate of progress is such to relieve us of anxiety as to the possibility of filling the enlarged cadres of the Army on the terms we now offer'.[52] Wolseley felt more anxiety than Lansdowne. For public consumption he remained an optimist writing to Dilke that the British Army was in a good state and had 'the power of striking a blow abroad with far greater readiness than we ever had'.[53] In private he was a pessimist, telling Butler that recruitment was in an appalling state: 'over one third are below even the low physical standard laid down for recruits. In fact at this moment over one half of the Home army are unfit to carry a pack or do a week's - I might perhaps say a day's hard work in the field'.[54] Wolseley could see no solution to this critical situation other than a substantial increase in pay. He was supported in this opinion by the Army Board.

One solution to the War Office's difficulty in finding enough efficient soldiers to serve abroad was to utilise the Guards. The proposal to send the Guards abroad had first been proposed by Stanhope in July 1891 when the War Office faced the urgent problem of finding replacements for the three battalions demanded by and sent to India. Stanhope proposed to increase the size of the Brigade of Guards by adding a battalion to the Coldstream Guards, and merging the single battalion Cameron Highlanders with the Scots Guards to form a third battalion. The Guards would then be composed of nine battalions, three of which would serve on the Mediterranean stations and be relieved every three years.[55] The opposition to this proposal was vociferous. Former

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52 Memo. on increase to army and recruitment, Lansdowne, 13 Dec. 1898, CAB37/48
53 Wolseley to Dilke, 1 Feb. 1899, Dilke Papers, BM 43916
54 Wolseley to Butler, 8 Feb. 1899, Dublin, 15,997
55 Meeting of the War Office Council, 31 May 1891, WO163/4; Stanhope to Queen, 31 July 1891, Stanhope Papers, 0250/4

Guardsmen and the Queen's Private Secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby refused to contemplate sending the Guards out of Britain during peace arguing that abroad they could not fulfil their function as the 'Queen's Guards'. The Queen herself opposed the idea of abolishing the Cameron Highlanders by making them the third battalion of the Scots Guards.[56] The debate continued into the next government and Campbell-Bannerman reluctantly abandoned both of Stanhope's proposals in 1893. The opposition to the proposals was too strong and Campbell-Bannerman lost the support of his superior Rosebery who argued that 'Europe might think we were coming to our last gasp when we send the Guards out of England...'.[57]

Wolseley had not been involved in the debate since he was then serving as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. Wolseley had an equivocal opinion of the Guards. On the one hand he saw them as a bastion of conservatism and a visible manifestation of all that was wrong with the opinions of that great defender of the Guards, the Duke of Cambridge. On the other hand he had been impressed by the performance of Guardsmen in Egypt and on the Khartoum expedition and recognised that, despite their infatuation with totally impractical fighting dress, they were exceedingly good troops in action. Once he became Commander-in-Chief Wolseley realised that the War Office was at the 'last gasp' when it came to finding efficient men for service abroad and consequently in 1896 he revived the scheme for sending the Guards abroad in peace. He wrote to the Duke of Connaught in November 1896 that the subject of the Guards 'has long been a hobby of mine', and that by adding the two battalions to the Guards according to Stanhope's scheme, the Guards would be in a better position to be called upon for small wars. He proposed sending three battalions of Guards to form the peace garrison of Gibraltar.[58] He repeated this argument in a letter to the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge in January 1897: 'If it becomes known in the Army that this addition to the Army was prevented because a certain set of Guards' officers

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[56] Ponsonby to Brodrick, 2 Aug. 1891, Stanhope Papers, 0250/4; meeting of the War Office Council, 6 Nov. 1891, WO163/4; Stanhope to Queen, 10 Nov. 1891, 0250/4; Stanhope to Salisbury, 14 Dec. 1891, Salisbury Papers

[57] Campbell-Bannerman to Queen, 3 Nov. 1892, Campbell-Bannerman Papers, BM 41206; Queen to Campbell-Bannerman, 22 Dec. 1892 in Wilson, CB, p174; Campbell-Bannerman to G.J. Campbell, 23 Jan. 1893, BM 41233; Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt, Feb. 1893 in Spender, p127; Rosebery to Campbell-Bannerman, 4 Feb. 1893, BM 41226; undated memo. on the question of the Brigade of Guards being sent on colonial duty, Cambridge, in Verner, pp412-4

[58] Wolseley to Connaught, Nov. 1896 in Life of Wolseley, p311

objected to all foreign service in peace, it would be in future practically impossible to give them a share in all our little wars as it has always been my endeavour to do'.[59] Somewhat surprisingly given the strength of his opposition to the scheme when proposed before, the Duke of Cambridge wrote to Wolseley signalling his acceptance that the Guards must be prepared 'to make this slight sacrifice to their individual comforts and convenience' in order to benefit the efficiency of the army in general.[60] With the support of the Duke of Cambridge, royal and political opposition fell away, the opinions of Guards officers were ignored, and the Guards were sent to Gibraltar.

An earlier chapter has argued that Wolseley wholeheartedly supported the concept of the Army Reserve, and had put forward many proposals to ensure its size and regular training. He had been opposed to proposals made in 1881 by Childers and later by Stanhope, with the support of the Duke of Cambridge, that the men of the Army Reserve should be made liable for recall for small wars during the first year of reserve service. This debate was rekindled by Buller in June 1895 shortly before Wolseley's appointment as Commander-in-Chief. Buller argued that 'the main blot on our military system is the failure of the Reserve to support our forces on the outbreak of a small war'. He argued for an alteration in the terms of enlistment so that all soldiers would be liable to be recalled to the colours during the first nine months of their service in the Army Reserve. This, he claimed, would provide 16,000 trained men immediately.[61] The subject of giving the government the power to recall men to the colours for small wars was discussed at a meeting of the Army Board in February 1896. The Army Board was favourable to the suggestion and only the Under Secretary of State, Brodrick, aired doubts as to the wisdom of offending employers. Wolseley appeared to have ignored the fact that a major revision of the Army Reserve was under discussion, and instead focused his attention on the minutiae of how the Reserve could be used for small wars.[62]

The terms of the recall for service in the Reserve Forces Act of 1882 meant a general call up irrespective of where most men were needed. To this end a move was made to amend Section

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59 Wolseley to Bigge, 7 Jan. 1897 in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, pp116-7
60 Wolseley to Cambridge, 17 Nov. 1896, Cambridge to Wolseley, 19 Nov. 1896 both in Verner, pp414-5
61 Memo. by Buller, 1 June 1895, WO32/8719; the same wording was used by Lansdowne in a memo. on 23 March 1896. WO32/6720
62 Meeting of the Army Board, 14 Feb. 1896, WO163/4b

14 of the Act which stipulated that a Reserve man could be appointed to any corps but could only be transferred to another branch of service either with his agreement or on a temporary attachment. In February 1896 Wolseley argued that the men should only be recalled to the units with which they had served before. This move was a little surprising given that while a commander in the field Wolseley had not shown the least interest in *esprit de corps* and had taken men from wherever necessary to fill his expeditionary force with experienced men. A month later, in March, Wolseley changed his tune. He had discovered that if the recall to service was made by classes then the Army Service Corps would be short of 650 men and the cavalry 4,000 in excess. Therefore Wolseley now favoured an amendment of Section 14. The Deputy Judge Advocate General reported to the Army Board that a wholesale batch of 'temporary attachments' to other branches, which Wolseley had originally suggested, would be against the spirit of the law. After the question was discussed thoroughly at the Board meeting Wolseley withdrew his support for an amendment of Section 14.[63]

Nevertheless, the government went ahead with its plans to amend the Reserve Forces Act to add the liability for recall during the first year of Reserve service, and to gain the power to send men where they were required. Lansdowne outlined the reasons why these measures were necessary:

> If ordered on active service, the battalion, which should consist of 1,057 men of fighting age and efficiency, would have only about 450 men qualified for service... Returns have been compiled which prove that if men, during their first year in the Reserve are more liable to recall to the Colours for war or warlike expeditions, we shall, at any moment, be ready to send on service a perfect force of 20,000, which is considered the maximum required for circumstances which would not admit of the Reserve, as a whole, being called out.[64]

The Bill was presented to Parliament in the 1896 Session and was rejected. Wolseley suggested to the Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces that the military MPs had opposed the measure as being destructive of regimental spirit since it meant posting men to strange corps. Wolseley proposed to get over this difficulty by inserting a clause stipulating that men should only be posted to their own corps but Wolseley would then offer them a bounty to volunteer for the units where

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63 Ibid. and Meeting of the Army Board, 2 March 1896, WO163/4b
64 Memo. on the draft Bill to amend the Reserve Forces Act, 1882, 23 March 1896, WO33/56

they were most needed. This would be only a temporary expedient to tide the Army over the period before which men enlisted under the amended terms were joining the Army Reserve in large numbers. Until then he supported the measure whereby soldiers in the Reserve who had enlisted before the amended Act was passed would be compensated by an additional 2d. a day during the period of their liability for service.[65]

Given Wolseley's active participation in these measures, the debate that followed seems extraordinary. In November 1897 as discussed earlier, Wolseley had written to Lansdowne calling for an increase of 12 battalions to the Army. Included in his long list of reasons why the increase was essential Wolseley wrote 'If given, it will enable us to meet the third demand on our Army, that namely, of being abler to send a small force abroad without the help of the Reserve'.[66] Lansdowne replied with some puzzlement since he had thought that the whole point of the Reserve Forces Bill that had been drawn up was to make reservists liable for service during their first year in Reserve and that therefore there was no question of sending home battalions abroad to fight a war without them being strengthened by the addition of some reservists. Wolseley's reply stunned Lansdowne:

> The proposal to bring a Bill last Session of Parliament to make the Army Reserve in their first year of service liable to be recalled to the Colours for service for which they were not originally intended, was not proposed by any military adviser of the Secretary of State. When the proposal was discussed by the Army Board, it was felt that the men to be made liable during the first year of their Reserve service for further service in the Ranks, should be only liable to such recall, in the event of war or of imminent war.[67]

While it is true that most of the impulse towards amending the Reserve Forces Act came from the civil side of the War Office, all questions relating to the subject were discussed thoroughly at the meetings of the Army Board which Wolseley attended. These discussions show that Wolseley appeared to have forsaken his argument that a sufficient number of volunteers from the Army Reserve would continue to offer their services for small wars. The amended Reserve Forces Act containing a liability for foreign service was passed in the 1898 Session of Parliament. Under the terms of the Act 5,000 reservists were offered additional pay if they volunteered to be liable for

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65 Memo. on the Army Reserve, 14 October 1896, WO32/6720
66 Memo. by Wolseley, 3 Nov. 1897, WO32/6357
67 Memo. by Lansdowne, 5 Nov. 1897; memo. by Wolseley, 13 Nov. 1897; both WO32/6357

recall to the colours in the event of a small war.[68] This was the proposal first put forward by Stanhope in 1892 which had been rejected by the Duke of Cambridge.

One other point of importance with regard to the Army Reserve must be made: the increase of additional battalions to the army actually had the effect of decreasing the size of the Reserve. Not only did the influx of young untrained men into the ranks necessitate the retention of experienced soldiers to train them and provide a solid backbone to the new battalions, but the military authorities went further and recalled some men from the Reserve to add support. This latter move was very controversial. The crucial discussion took place in a meeting of the Army Board in January 1898. Lansdowne took the lead by suggesting that men would be needed from the Reserve during the next two or three years to lessen the strain of the overall increase in the size of the army coupled with the demand from India for additional drafts. Wolseley put forward a proposal to invite infantry reservists who had at least two years Reserve service remaining to rejoin the colours for service in the particular regiments to be strengthened, but he was not at all happy about this, particularly if the numbers to be invited and the period of their extended services were to be unlimited. He professed to believe that a sufficient number of recruits would be forthcoming so as to make the recall of reservists unnecessary, but was prepared to accept the arguments of his colleagues that the immediate requirement was for trained men and not a large number of raw recruits. He gave his assent to the proposal to use the Reserve for this purpose only when Lansdowne convinced him that 'this recall of men from the Reserve must be regarded as a purely temporary expedient to meet a temporary demand'.[69] The result was that the size of the First Class Army Reserve fell from nearly 71,000 in 1897 to just over 62,000 in 1899.

This fall in the size of the Army Reserve made the situation far more serious than it had been in 1891, when, as described above, the army would already have encountered great difficulties in conducting a war of any length or complication with the Reserve at its existing size. Wolseley attempted to bring home the seriousness of the worsening situation in a memorandum to Lansdowne in January 1899 when he pointed out that, if after mobilisation, two Army Corps were

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68 Spiers, Late Victorian Army p62
69 Meeting of the Army Board, 6 Jan. 1898, WO163/4b

sent abroad then 33,371 Army Reservists would be needed to complete the infantry battalions to their war establishment of 1,103 men. This meant that only 22 battalions of the 54 in the two Army Corps could be completed using their own reservists; the other battalions would have to borrow men from elsewhere. This would leave only 12,330 line reservists at home to replace casualties. It was estimated that approximately ten men per battalion per month would reach the age to be drafted abroad. If a draft of 2,000 men was sent out two months after the embarkation of the field force to each of the 50 battalions in the two Army Corps, ignoring the needs of the four battalions on the line of communications, then 10,000 men would be required, leaving only 2,032 Guards and 298 line reservists to make up the next draft. Therefore Wolseley emphasised the fact that after a period of four months the Militia would have to be embodied.[70] Lansdowne was not convinced that the situation was that serious and replied that there was a 'liberal surplus' of reserves for drafts.[71] It thus appears that Wolseley was unable to raise the Army Reserve to the size necessary for it to fulfil the dual functions as substitute and supplement to the home establishment, owing to circumstances over which he had little control.

As Commander-in-Chief Wolseley continued his struggle to ensure that only the best men were selected for the higher ranks of the army and for staff appointments. In January 1896 Wolseley wrote to the P.U.S. that he had decided that 'I shall refuse to recommend any colonel for promotion whom I do not believe to be fit to command troops in the field as a Major General... This disposes of the question of "seniority versus efficiency".' He outlined his plans to continue the reduction in the General Officers' List which he felt was 'encumbered by useless and inefficient men some of whom are now employed'. Wolseley announced his intention to write to eight of the worst senior officers on the half-pay list to inform them that they had no chance of further employment and should retire from the army.[72] Wolseley wrote to the Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir George White, asking for his recommendations of suitable men for rapid advancement so that officers serving in India would have the same chance of promotion as those

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70 Memo. by Wolseley, 7 Jan. 1899; memo. by Stopford, 4 Jan. 1899. Both in Elgin Documents
71 Lansdowne to Wolseley, 17 Jan. 1899, Elgin Documents
72 Memo. on selection, Wolseley, 21 Jan. 1896, WO32/6297

officers serving at home.[73] Wolseley's drive in this area earned him some admiration and some criticism. He met with the approval of Lansdowne who wrote to Salisbury that Wolseley was 'determined to get rid of incompetent senior officers, and we are now very particular not only as to the colonels, but as to the seconds in command of regiments. I fancy that in many quarters he is already attacked as "ruthless".'[74] Ruthless or not, Wolseley was adamant that this process was essential for the good of the army despite the opposition he met from within the War Office.

The Promotion Board had been set up in 1890 to make recommendations on appointments and to temper the overwhelming influence of the Commander-in-Chief. At the time Wolseley had approved of this, but now he was Commander-in-Chief his belief in his own sense of justice and ability to choose the right men was so strong that he saw little necessity for a Board to make recommendations for him. Grove wrote a memorandum in October 1896 correcting Wolseley's opinions on the means of promotion. He proposed that in future all promotions to the rank of Major General would be by selection but insisted that these would be made by the Promotion Board and not by Wolseley alone.[75] In fact neither Grove nor Wolseley succeeded in their aim of securing these appointments by selection immediately. The opposition of officers hoping for or expecting promotion ensured that the War Office had to move more cautiously in the direction of pure selection than Wolseley wanted. A War Office committee on selection reported at the end of 1897 recommending that in 1898 one quarter of the promotions to the rank of Major General should be made by seniority, in 1899 one fifth and from 1900 all promotions to be by selection only.[76]

During the late 1890s the men who would hold high appointments during the First World War were passing through the Staff College. It has already been noted previously that Wolseley had little interest in the Staff College itself beyond encouraging young promising officers to sit the examination, and employing its graduates on his campaigns. Eight out of the 32 places open annually were allocated by nomination, and in 1896 Wolseley used his position to nominate

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73 Wolseley to White, Oct. 1896 in Life of Wolseley, p284
74 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 29 Oct. 1896, Salisbury Papers
75 Memo. on selection, Grove, 10 Oct. 1896, WO32/6297
76 Report of the War Office Committee on selection, 20 Nov. 1897, WO32/6297

Douglas Haig, who had failed the examination in 1893, but who then went on to pass out successfully and give useful service in South Africa during the Boer War, and later commanded the British Army on the Western Front during the First World War.[77]

An earlier chapter described the unsuccessful attempts of the military authorities to seek political and financial permission to hold regular large-scale manoeuvres. When Wolseley became Commander-in-Chief little had changed in this area and manoeuvres were still little more than expanded inspections. For example in September 1896 Wolseley visited Aldershot to inspect 23 battalions on manoeuvres there, and he was reasonably impressed by the standard of training he saw there; but immediately after this, he made an unexpected visit to the exercises held by the South Eastern Command at Dover, where he was less impressed by the troops, drawing attention to the 'want of tactical training in many squadrons and companies'. It therefore appeared that when Wolseley's presence was expected, as at Aldershot, preparations could be made to such a degree as to conceal weaknesses in training, but unexpected visits, which met with the approval of the military correspondent of The Times, produced different results.[78] After this experience Wolseley again stepped up the pressure on the political authorities to find the finance and, crucially, the space, for large-scale manoeuvres. In 1898 he was successful when the War Office purchased a large area of Salisbury Plain for manoeuvres; nevertheless, the political side of the War Office initially withheld permission for large-scale manoeuvres in 1898, demanding a delay on financial grounds till 1899. Wolseley fought back, and in August and September the cavalry held some exercises: the last fortnight in August was devoted to various drills of all arms, and in the first week in September large-scale manoeuvres were held for the first time since 1872.

Wolseley wrote a very detailed memorandum for Lansdowne on the manoeuvres.[79] These had been organised on the lines of two Army Corps with brigades of cavalry, one commanded by the Duke of Connaught and one by Buller, manoeuvring against each other. He pointed out that the preliminary drill period was essential because the men forming each Army Corps came from different parts of the United Kingdom and had to be concentrated in one area and given time to

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77 T. Travers, The Killing Ground, (London 1987) p8
78 The Times, 26 Sept. 1896
79 Report on the manoeuvres of 1898, Wolseley, 27 Oct. 1898, WO279/4

learn to work together. In addition the units of the Militia had to be worked into the whole Corps. Wolseley added that in the event of mobilisation for a war abroad this preliminary period of concentration and training would need to be repeated before embarkation.

Wolseley stated that the organisation of the manoeuvres meant that 'it would be optimistic to say that the fullest tactical value was obtained from each day's operation'. The shortage of water on Salisbury Plain and the difficulties encountered in obtaining and utilising large amounts of civilian transport to augment that provided by regiments and Army Service Corps meant that at the end of each day's manoeuvres the men were marched off to pre-prepared camps. In an article for Blackwood's Magazine Colonel Grierson argued that these problems could have been circumvented had the organisation of the manoeuvres been altered so that each day's operations had followed on naturally from the previous day's by leaving outposts in contact with the opposing force freeing the rest of the soldiers to march back to their camps. Had this been done, Grierson argued, the manoeuvres would have corresponded more closely with the realities of campaigning and have had more tactical value.[80]

Wolseley pointed out another reason for the unsatisfactory organisation of the manoeuvres which seemed rather weak:

> Long days and nights out of bed seriously affect the recruiting of a voluntary army, and we cannot afford to ignore that fact. To work our men during manoeuvres, as is often done abroad, would necessitate a far greater pressure upon our young soldiers than those responsible for the recruiting of our volunteer army can venture to impose, during peace, upon the Rank and File...

Basically Wolseley was arguing that despite the shortness of period of the manoeuvres the strain would be too great for the army because the men were too young to march the long distances required during manoeuvres and any complaints from soldiers taking part would adversely affect recruitment. In other words the army was too young to be trained properly and there was no easy solution to this problem since the kind of men Wolseley really wanted to recruit were not interested in enlisting.

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[80] Col. J.M. Grierson, 'The Salisbury Manoeuvres' in Blackwood's, Vol. CLXIV, No. 997, (Nov. 1898) pp676-81

Wolseley made many other comments of importance; 'the extent of front covered by each force was on occasions remarkable, and at times excessive'. This would not have mattered had the staff been better at their jobs but Wolseley noted that there was a tendency to deploy troops too soon, and that 'full advantage was seldom taken of the conformation of the ground to conceal the advance of attacking columns'. Therefore the intentions of each force should have been obvious to its opponents long before action was resumed; except that Wolseley also noted that scouting and reconnaissances were poorly undertaken. This was a particular weakness of the cavalry and Wolseley made many suggestions on how the cavalry could balance its twin duties of reconnaissance for the whole force, and concentration for its own fighting requirements. The performance of the artillery and engineers met with general approval.

Wolseley was impressed by the performance of the infantry soldiers despite their youth but he was rather less pleased with the performance of their commanding officers. He noted that the formations had frequently been faulty, with the men being exposed to artillery fire, and open order was often adopted either too early or too late when attacking; and the use of the ground was poor. Wolseley was disappointed by the use of machine guns and noted that 'to collect machine guns together and employ them as batteries is a mistaken use of the weapon'. Furthermore the machine gun was viewed by Wolseley as primarily a weapon of defence and the commanders had been too willing to bring machine guns into action regardless of whether the circumstances demanded their use.

Despite his criticisms Wolseley was generally satisfied with the state of the army as revealed by the manoeuvres and concluded his report:

> While these manoeuvres have brought out mistakes they have shown indubitably the immense strides which the Army has made of recent years; the increased efficiency of the Staff, the keenness, the interest in, and the increased knowledge of, their profession displayed by our regimental officers, the tact and educated intelligence of our Warrant and non-commissioned officers, and the improved discipline, good conduct and endurance of our young rank and file have been the prominent and most gratifying features in the manoeuvres of 1898.

A year later Wolseley's opinion would be subjected to closer investigation after the early events of the Boer War.

It has already been noted that when presenting his proposals for the substantial increase in the size of the army Wolseley presented an overview of the military requirements of the Empire. His suspicion that such an assessment had not been made since 1888 had been confirmed earlier by Salisbury who, in 1895, set up the Cabinet Defence Committee under the presidency of the Duke of Devonshire expressly for the purpose. The aim of this committee was to introduce an element of co-operation between the demands of the War Office, Admiralty, India Office, Foreign Office and Colonial Office on imperial defence. The committee would be composed of the responsible ministers with the presence of their principal advisers. Unfortunately Admiralty opposition to the plan meant that whilst the committee was established the membership was restricted only to Cabinet members and it achieved little.[81] Wolseley was therefore left free to involve himself in imperial strategy; his previous interest in this subject has been examined in an earlier chapter. As Commander-in-Chief he was forced to reconsider his opinions on three areas of previous interest, India, Egypt, and home defence.

Wolseley accepted that India held a central position in the British Empire, but he deplored the demands it made on the home army. Now that his rival Roberts had left India for command in Ireland Wolseley no longer needed to fear that his opinions on Indian defence would be easily dismissed as evidence of professional rivalry. In 1896 Wolseley was given the opportunity to state his views on the effect India had on the military requirements of the Empire when he was invited to give evidence to the Royal Commission on the Military and Civil Expenditure of India. He argued that the need to send so many drafts annually to India was 'a serious inconvenience to our military organisation' and affected recruitment adversely. He made the dramatic statement that since 'our Army was really a great reserve for the Army in India' India should therefore pay for 'everything connected with the Army'. A survey should be undertaken to estimate how many troops were maintained solely for Indian purposes. This would include the garrisons of colonies such as Mauritius and Aden which were staging posts on the sea route to India and of little value

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81 J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, (London 1964) p18; The Joint Naval and Military Committee established while Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief in Ireland was set up to ensure co-operation between the Admiralty and the War Office on home defence. Wolseley was dissatisfied with its proceedings but was persuaded to back away from a major dispute by Buller. WO32/6295

otherwise to the Empire, and the training and pay of men raised to supply the drafts to, and the establishment of the British Army in India. This proposal was so politically unacceptable that little comment was made on it.

More controversially Wolseley went on to make criticisms of the performance of native soldiers in India, which he based on his experiences during the Indian Mutiny. His comment 'We should not like to put our Indian troops in front of European soldiers. I should not like to fight France or Germany or any other army with Indian troops' aroused outrage both in Britain and in India.[82] The Times reprinted extracts from the Indian newspaper The Pioneer which were highly critical of Wolseley. The Queen was also furious with Wolseley's criticism of her Indian troops. Wolseley replied defending his evidence, 'He would never flatter the native soldier by allowing him to think himself the equal of the British soldier as a fighting man. Lord Wolseley thinks it would be highly dangerous to the Empire to do so'.[83] The Queen recognised that British rule in India rested on the foundation that the native was inferior to the British and therefore did not press her case nor did she ask for a public apology from Wolseley.

It has already been shown that Wolseley held ambivalent opinions on Egypt's value as a British possession. The threat of the Dervishes to Egypt's southern frontier was a constant concern to the British consul in Cairo, Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer, who frequently requested permission from the Foreign Office to undertake limited campaigns to strengthen Egypt's position on the southern frontier against encroachments by the Dervishes. By 1896 the government was prepared to permit Cromer to send an army 'as far - and no further - than we can [go] without any undue effort on the part of Egypt'.[84] In his book on his period of office in Egypt Cromer claimed that the advance in the Sudan 'was dubbed a "Foreign Office War"... The War Office assumed no responsibility, and issued no orders'.[85] This statement needs re-examination. It was unlikely that Wolseley's opinions would have been ignored since although the Sirdar, Kitchener, had served as

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[82] Royal Commission on the Military and Civil Expenditure of India; Wolseley's evidence was reported in The Times, 30 July 1896

[83] The Times, 1, 6, & 8 Aug. 1896; Queen to Wolseley, 7 Aug. 1896, Wolseley to Queen, 10 Aug. 1896 both in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, pp61-3

[84] For details of British and Egyptian policy towards the Sudan between 1885 and 1896 see G.M. Sanderson, England, Europe and the Upper Nile, (Edinburgh 1965), and Cromer, Modern Egypt

[85] Cromer, p106

an intelligence officer during the 1885 campaign, Wolseley had greater experience of the terrain and the problems likely to be encountered. The government did consult Wolseley on 12 March 1896 when it held a Cabinet to decide the future policy towards the Sudan. Wolseley recommended that an initial demonstration should be made of Egyptian power either by an advance to Akasheh, 30 miles beyond Egyptian positions at Sarras, or a move towards Abu Hamed on the Nile, both with the ultimate aim of re-occupying the province of Dongola. The Cabinet agreed to this plan but decided that it should be a purely Egyptian advance and that the British commander in Egypt, General Knowles, should play no part beyond the provision of supplies. On 15 March the Cabinet gave Cromer and Kitchener the total authority to accept orders only from the Foreign Office and towards the end of March Cromer announced his intention to treat War Office directives 'not as instructions, but simply as the views of Her Majesty's Government's military advisers, for careful consideration'.[86] Wolseley attempted in vain to force a War Office liaison officer onto Kitchener.

It seemed at this stage that the advance into the Sudan was to be a 'Foreign Office War' because of the anomalous position held by Egypt within the Empire; it was not a colony nor a formally acknowledged area of suzerainty, it was a country under British occupation for mainly financial reasons. In May Wolseley reacted strongly to the isolation of the War Office from any control over the campaign. He wrote to Lansdowne that 'unless you desire it, or in the case of some evident necessity for doing so, I do not propose, in the future, to criticise Sir Herbert Kitchener's arrangements, or to call attention to any measures which may appear to me to entail avoidable risk'. Lansdowne felt this statement was going too far in the direction of abandoning all responsibility for the campaign. He told the Cabinet that while he supported Wolseley's argument that the War Office should not be held responsible for any mistakes made in the Sudan he had told Wolseley that he must keep abreast of events because inevitably should a disaster occur the British Army would be called upon to rescue the Egyptian army.[87]

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86 Sanderson, p244-5
87 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 10 May 1896; memo. on the Sudan, Lansdowne, 12 May 1896, both in CAB37/41

In March 1896 Lansdowne had informed Salisbury that in the opinion of his military advisers although Kitchener had won a victory at Firket 'it affords no evidence whatever as to the fitness of the fellaheen regiments to meet Dervishes under conditions equally favourable to both'.[88] Wolseley had cleverly used Lansdowne to create some doubt in the Cabinet's mind as to whether the Egyptian army alone could re-conquer the Sudan. The reconquest of the Sudan was now official policy since rumours had been heard that a French force under Captain Marchand was marching across Africa from the west to establish a French position on the Upper Nile. Wolseley made the most of the opportunity presented by the Egyptian setback at Berber in October 1897 pressing both Lansdowne and the Queen to request the immediate despatch of British troops to the Sudan. Lansdowne wrote to Salisbury that 'Lord Wolseley, assures me that in spite of our "overdrawn account" of battalions abroad, we could, for such an enterprise as this, lay our hands on the 8 battalions which would be wanted. The assumption of course is that we should get them back in a very short time'.[89] In June Cromer had argued that British troops were not needed in the Sudan and should not be used because of the climate, but during November and December this view was reconsidered in the light of the tenuous hold the Egyptian army had on Berber and the rumours that the Khalifa was amassing a large army at Omdurman. Therefore Kitchener pressed Cromer to request more troops which he did on 31 December 1897. Cromer feared that this would mean the relinquishment of Egyptian and Foreign Office control over the campaign and put the War Office in control. However Wolseley tactfully suggested that Kitchener should retain overall command, despite the fact that Wolseley had sent General Grenfell to take over the command of the British garrison in Egypt expressly because he had Egyptian experience and would be able to supersede Kitchener should the circumstances dictate.[90]

During January 1898 negotiations took place on the question of how many British troops should be sent to take part in the final advance on Khartoum. Wolseley pressed for the despatch of eight British battalions, a cavalry regiment on war strength and field batteries. Lansdowne decided that four battalions would be sufficient and accordingly telegraphed the G.O.C. Egypt that these

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88 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 18 March 1896, Salisbury Papers
89 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 20 Oct. 1897; Lansdowne to Salisbury, 28 Dec. 1897, both in Salisbury Papers
90 Cromer to Lansdowne, June 1897 in Newton, p147; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 5 Jan. 1898, WO32/6380

troops would be sent so that four British battalions could be placed at Kitchener's disposal. Grenfell replied that this number would be sufficient to enable Kitchener to hold his present position but that the War Office should be prepared to send three more battalions and cavalry and artillery for the advance on Metemmeh.[91] In the event eight British battalions and a regiment of cavalry took part in the battle of Omdurman in September 1898.

In general Wolseley and Lansdowne were in agreement on how to handle the Sudan campaign but one point of dispute presaged more serious problems of communication on foreign policy issues. In January 1898 Wood told Wolseley that he was concerned that British troops earmarked for the future garrison of Khartoum would be quartered in an unhealthy area. This was the first Wolseley had heard of this proposal to use British troops to garrison Khartoum and wrote to Lansdowne objecting that he had not been informed. Lansdowne replied with an apology saying that he had not thought it necessary to consult the Commander-in-Chief since British troops would remain in Khartoum only for a short period, and that he had only consulted the Treasury on the matter because of the cost of retaining British troops there.[92] This provides evidence that Wolseley was not always consulted on the effect a foreign policy decision might have on military policy, and these lapses of communication would become more marked on the issue of South Africa, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The subject of home defence was always of great interest to Wolseley but during this period much of the work on the subject was being done by the Joint Naval and Military Committee. For example, Wolseley was not invited to comment as Commander-in-Chief on the allocation of the defence portion of the 1897 Army Services Loan but only as a member of the committee. This loan was granted to improve the mercantile harbours, military ports and naval bases, and commercial ports in Britain, and fortresses and coaling stations abroad.[93] Wolseley made few comments on the allocation of resources but signalled his approval that at last something

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91 Lansdowne to Grenfell & Grenfell to Lansdowne, 5 Jan. 1898, WO33/151; Wolseley to Kitchener, 14 April 1898, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/10

92 Wood to Wolseley, 3 Jan. 1898; Wolseley to P.U.S., 3 Jan. 1898; Lansdowne to Wolseley, 4 Jan. 1898, all in WO32/6380

93 Memo. by the military members of the Joint Naval and Military Council on the defence portion of the Army Services Loan, 1897, WO32/6256

was being done to remedy the defenceless state of the Empire he had publicised during the late 1880s.

The outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899 forced Britain to send the majority of her fighting regiments to South Africa. There was great alarm that France and Russia might take advantage of Britain's defenceless state and make war. In 1899 the French Foreign Minister Delcassé visited St Petersburg, and in 1900 the French and Russian chiefs of staff met and agreed that in certain eventualities Russia would support France in the event of a war with Britain. Only one division of British troops had been despatched from India to South Africa, though a quantity of equipment was also sent, so there was less concern over the Russian threat to India. Nevertheless, the secret service was ordered to be on guard for any hint of Russian preparations.[94] The threat from France was seen as far more serious. In a memorandum from T.H. Sanderson of the Foreign Office to Salisbury in December 1899 it was reported that Colonel Dawson, the military attaché in Paris, and Sir E. Monson, the ambassador, were concerned that war was imminent and that 'the idea of a war with England would be popular with the army and with many influential classes', and that war could only be averted by Britain being in such a strong position as to make such a venture extremely hazardous.[95] Two days later Salisbury asked the Duke of Devonshire, as president of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, to set up an interdepartmental committee to report 'on the hypothesis that we are to have a French war next October'.[96] Throughout the early part of 1900 the Duke of Devonshire battled with the conflicting views on the feasibility of a French invasion put forward by the Admiralty and the War Office just as he had done so over fifteen years earlier when as Lord Hartington he had been Secretary of State for War.

In a memorandum dated 29 December 1899 and reissued on 3 January 1900 Wolseley responded to the threat of a war with France in a typical fashion: he proposed an immediate augmentation to the army. His aim was to create two Regular and one Militia Army Corps separate from the troops required for South Africa. Wolseley made detailed proposals as to how

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[94] March 1900, P.R.O. HD3/114
[95] T.H. Sanderson to Salisbury, 13 Dec. 1899, quoted in G.P. Gooch & H.W. Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, (London 1926)
[96] Salisbury to Devonshire, 15 Dec. 1899, Devonshire Papers 340.2808

many new battalions should be created, 32, and how the men should be recruited, and these proposals will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. What is of relevance here is the fact that the government was prepared to mobilise 32 battalions of the Militia against invasion despite Wolseley's argument that the Militia would in no way be capable of repelling the elite of the French Army.[97] This state of affairs was the natural result of the years during which Wolseley had unsuccessfully battled for funds to allow the auxiliary forces to be trained on the ground they would have to defend. Unlike the situation during the invasion scares of the 1880s, Wolseley and the government were quite correct to be alarmed at the prospect of war with France: in July 1900 the D.M.I., Ardagh, informed Wolseley that during the previous two years there had been three French projects for the invasion of Britain in response to the Fashoda crisis.[98]

Wolseley's term of office as Commander-in-Chief did not inaugurate a great era of rapid reform. There can be little doubt that his position had been significantly weakened by the alterations made to his post but it was unjust of Wolseley to place the blame for his failures solely on these changes. His personality led to frequent clashes with Lansdowne and the members of the Army Board which weakened the cause of reform. Had he been more willing to work with his colleagues rather than to insist that he should have pre-eminence over them more could have been achieved. Furthermore his ill-health was a significant factor which Wolseley chose to ignore in his comments on his term of office. Nevertheless there were some important developments; after years of struggling against the parsimony of Parliament and the Treasury Wolseley had succeeded in winning a large increase in the size of the army. It was not as large as he wanted but signalled nonetheless political acceptance that such an increase was needed. Wolseley opposed piecemeal changes which served only to provide short-term remedies to long-standing problems. This is why he disagreed with the Army Board on the methods of recruitment for the Garrison Artillery and the abolition of deferred pay; he realised that the only solution to recruitment was a substantial increase in the basic pay of the soldier but failed to convince the politicians of this. Wolseley

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[97] Memo. on the threat from France, Wolseley, 29 Dec. 1899, CAB37/51; Memo. on the need to increase the army, Wolseley, 3 Jan. 1900, WO32/6360

[98] Memo. on a French Invasion, Ardagh, 11 July 1900, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/14. The Intelligence Department also drew up plans for action in the event of a war with France in 1898. This involved a major raid on the French naval port of Brest. PRO30/40/2

succeeded in bringing about the large-scale Salisbury manoeuvres which led to the closer examination of the tactical training of the army and to the recommendations for improvement.

It would be unfair to attempt to assess whether the British Army was significantly better in 1899 than in 1895 because major reforms of the army could only be made over a period of time and the five year term of office was barely enough to make a start in this direction. Wolseley had the ideas but was unable to carry them out largely due to his own personal failings. Nevertheless war must be seen as the ultimate test of the efficiency of the army and the next chapter will assess how the army Wolseley had struggled to reform over a 30 year period could cope with the demands of a major war.

Chapter 9 - The Test of War

The diplomatic relationship between the British colonies of Natal and Cape Colony and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State had been regulated by the London Convention of 1884. Under the terms of the Convention the republics were placed under British suzerainty; they were free to conduct their own internal affairs, but their relations with foreign powers were subject to British control. The expansion of the diamond and gold mining industries in the 1880s led to a great influx of British settlers into the Transvaal, the so-called Uitlanders. By the early 1890s they were agitating for the franchise to be granted to them by the Boers. In December 1895 Doctor L.S. Jameson led a band of colonists into the Transvaal in an attempt to force a settlement of the franchise question. This raid, although a failure, set in motion a train of events which would lead to the outbreak of the Second Boer War in October 1899.

The politicians in London and South Africa struggled to find a diplomatic solution to the franchise question without resorting to war. In South Africa Sir Alfred Milner, High Commissioner since 1897, pursued an aggressive policy towards the Transvaal which made war more likely. Although in 1899 a section of the British public, led by the Liberal press, was hostile to a war in South Africa, other newspapers, particularly The Times, The Morning Post and The Daily News were jingoistic.[1] They argued that the Boers would not put up much of a fight, and that the reformed British Army was ready to fight any enemy anywhere in the world and win. This opinion is illustrated by an article which appeared anonymously in the August 1899 issue of Blackwood's Magazine:

> The idea is very prevalent in this country that war with the Transvaal means a terrible and bloody struggle - that such a conflict would severely tax British military resources, that it could not be concluded without a vast expenditure of money, and that it must necessarily demand consummate leadership to bring to a successful issue. For this view there appears to be no adequate justification.[2]

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[1] T. Pakenham, The Boer War, (London, 1979) p84; See also H.S. Wilkinson, The Lessons of the War, (London, 1900) which was a compilation of articles by Wilkinson published in The London Letter during the war.

[2] C.E. Callwell, 'A Boer War: the Military Aspect' in Blackwood's, Vol. CLXVI, (August 1899) p259-65. Authorship confirmed by the Wellesley Index. It was perhaps fortunate for Callwell's career as an intelligence officer and author of many books on military subjects that this article did appear anonymously.

In the circumstances it is not altogether surprising that the despatch of the First Army Corps to South Africa in October 1899 appeared to the public to signal the start of a great colonial adventure, and a chance to avenge the 1881 defeat at the hands of the Boers at Majuba.

The early reverses suffered by the British Army, particularly the events of Black Week in December 1899, came as a great shock to late Victorian society. Although Britain eventually overcame the Boers, it took until 1902 for the war to reach a final settlement despite the fact that the early military objectives had all been attained by the end of 1900. There seemed to be a need to find a scapegoat, someone to blame for these disasters, and the role of the Commander-in-Chief, Wolseley, came under close scrutiny. The suspicion that Wolseley should accept a large measure of the blame was given credence by the report of the Elgin Commission set up to examine the preparations for the war. The points on which the commission criticised Wolseley's performance will be examined in detail in this chapter.

This chapter will not attempt to re-examine the causes of the Boer War, nor will it reassess the performance of the British Army in that war since these subjects have been covered exhaustively elsewhere.[3] It will concentrate on the role played by Wolseley in the years immediately before the outbreak of the war, concentrating on the months preceding the despatch of the First Army Corps to South Africa in 1899. It will examine the extent to which diplomacy and military policy did, or did not, interact during this period, and how and why Wolseley urged greater military preparations while largely ignorant of the state of diplomacy. The chapter will then turn to analyse which aspects of the British performance in South Africa reflected on the reforms Wolseley had pressed for throughout his career at the War Office. The last topic to be examined will be the state of civil-military relations as revealed by the war, particularly the problems of the position of the Commander-in-Chief under the terms of the 1895 Order in Council.

Before turning to the events preceding the despatch of the First Army Corps it is worthwhile to examine Wolseley's own attitude towards the Boers. Wolseley had travelled through

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[3] For example, Pakenham; Amery, Times History; J.F. Maurice, The Official History of the War in South Africa, (London, 1906); W.B. Pemberton, Battles of the Boer War, (London, 1981)

the Transvaal in September and October 1879 when he was High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in South Africa and he had not been impressed by what he had seen. He had commented that 'the Boer is in some respects far inferior to the Zulu, and the most ignorant & bigotted [sic] & small-minded of white men'. In January 1880 when Wolseley heard that the Boers were concentrating near Potchefstroon to agitate against the South African Federation he described them as 'poor silly creatures they go on playing at soldiers & blustering, knowing in their hearts they would bolt at the sight of the first troop of our Dragoons they saw'. He was determined that 'the Union Jack would fly over the Transvaal as long as the sun shone, and that the Vaal would flow backwards ere the British would withdraw'.[4] Majuba proved Wolseley wrong, and he never forgave Wood for concluding a peace treaty with the Boers before seeking revenge for the British defeat. Wolseley's attitude towards the Boers changed while he was Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. He was aware that, after the Jameson Raid, the Boers had begun to order vast stocks of rifles and ammunition, were purchasing the most modern artillery guns from Krupps and Creuzot, and encouraging former artillery men from the German Army to settle in the Transvaal. Therefore, while expressing his confidence in public that the British Army would defeat the Boers with ease, in private he showed more concern: for example, he wrote to the Duke of Cambridge in September 1899 'if this war comes off it will be the most serious war England has ever had, when the size of our Army to be engaged and the distance of the seat of war from England are taken into consideration'.[5] This anxiety had been uppermost in Wolseley's mind while urging military preparations in support of diplomacy throughout the critical months of 1899.

The Elgin Commission placed the blame for the tardy preparations for the Boer War squarely on Wolseley's shoulders. The report stated that 'the general impression to be derived from the whole circumstances must be that the special function of the Commander-in-Chief, under the Order in Council of 1895, viz.: "the preparation of schemes of offensive and defensive operations", was not exercised on this occasion in any systematic fashion'. It continued in the same vein to suggest that 'it is perhaps not altogether remarkable under the circumstances above

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[4] Journal, 13 Oct. 1879 & 7 Jan. 1880, WO147/7
[5] Wolseley to Cambridge, 12 Sept. 1899 in Verner, p421

described that no plan of campaign ever existed for operations in South Africa'.[6] The government claimed that it had not been informed of the strength of the Boer forces nor of their likely tactics. The government's implicit argument was that had this strength been known diplomacy would not have been allowed to break down, the ultimatum would not have been issued and war would not have followed. Wolseley's defence was basically that he had never been informed of the state of diplomacy, and the information he did receive was inadequate for the preparation of plans of offence and defence.

The report raised a number of questions about Wolseley's role in the crisis which led to the outbreak of the Boer War. Firstly, was it true that the government did not know the strength of the Boers? Secondly, why did it appear that no plans for operations in South Africa had been drawn up? Thirdly, to what extent did the government take Wolseley into their confidence? And lastly, what effect did these circumstances have on the early outcome of the war?

On the first question - did the government know the strength of the Boers - the answer has to be that it did. In 1896 the D.M.I., Ardagh, wrote a detailed memorandum on the forces of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. This memorandum was the first issue of Military Notes on the Dutch Republics, a copy of which was sent to the G.O.C. in South Africa, and was reissued in June 1899. In this memorandum Ardagh used the latest almanac of the Transvaal to estimate the number of burghers liable for military duty, and gave the total as 25,457 men. To this total he added the burghers of the Orange Free State, which was at present neutral, because he was convinced that they would join their northern brethren against a British force. He also noted that former artillery men from Germany were being encouraged to settle in the Transvaal and that they, in addition to other foreign sympathisers, would bring the total force Britain might have to face to 48,000. Ardagh commented on possible strategy: since 1880, towns had become 'decisive strategical points' as industry, particularly gold mining, had grown. Therefore he believed that the occupation of Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Rand would deliver the whole country to British control. Ardagh also noted that the demand for mules exceeded the supply and that therefore any large-scale advance would have to use the railways as the main line of communication. Since the

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[6] Elgin Commission, paras. 45-6

railway from Natal into the Transvaal passed through mountainous country it would be preferable to make the main line of advance along the Cape-Transvaal railway which, though far longer and passing through the Orange Free State, covered terrain far more suitable for military action.[7]

This memorandum was extremely important because it laid the groundwork for all further strategic discussions. It is known that Wolseley did pass this memorandum to Lansdowne, and that it was subsequently seen by Salisbury. The evidence for this comes from the correspondence between Lansdowne and Salisbury when, on 21 April 1897, Salisbury confessed to Lansdowne that 'I am astonished at reading the recommendations of Sir J. Ardagh'.[8] Both Wolseley and Ardagh argued that the military could not make adequate preparations for either the defence of Cape Colony or Natal, or for offensive operations against the Transvaal, until the diplomats and politicians had decided on the attitude to be adopted towards the Orange Free State through whose territory the ideal route from the Cape lay. Furthermore Ardagh and Wolseley had asked for a decision to be made on the possibility of blockading the Portuguese port of Lourenço Marques, through which most of the Boer imports of armaments were made. Since the Boers were importing vast quantities of the most modern armaments from Germany, this was a serious concern and both military men were prepared to risk a war with Portugal, which had negligible military resources, in order to stop the imports. Salisbury and Lansdowne felt that the military were attempting to meddle in purely diplomatic matters, and the indignation expressed in 1897 may go some way to explaining why in 1899 the military were left so much in the dark about the state of diplomacy.

The civil-military relations of these years bear a marked resemblance to the military-naval relations of the late 1880s when the invasion question was under discussion. Then, as in 1899, the different parties misunderstood each other's arguments and co-operation was minimal. The position should have been better in 1899 because the Cabinet Defence Committee was in existence. This committee, however, was quite incapable of reconciling the differences of policy and requirements between the Colonial Office, the War Office, and the Cabinet. Therefore

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[7] Memo. on the Transvaal Boers from a military point of view, Ardagh, Oct. 1896, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/14

[8] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 9 April 1897, Salisbury Papers; Salisbury to Lansdowne, 21 April 1897 in Newton, p145

personal relationships assumed a great significance, with unfortunate consequences. The previous chapter commented on the often poor relations between Wolseley and Lansdowne, and it is clear that this relationship deteriorated further during the South African crisis. Another figure has to be added to the equation, the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, who at one time appeared to support Wolseley's calls for preparations to be made for war, and at other times to support the Cabinet's and Lansdowne's policy of waiting on events.[9] Given all these circumstances it is not surprising that military, political and diplomatic policies were not in harmony in 1899.

In his evidence to the Elgin Commission Lansdowne claimed that 'I cannot call to mind any proposal on the part of the Commander-in-Chief for a large strengthening of our position in South Africa as an antidote to the Boer preparations'. He dismissed Wolseley's 1896 request for two additional battalions to be sent out to South Africa as part of a general scheme for the redistribution of the British Army abroad and a part of the wider proposal to increase the size of the home establishment. Lansdowne claimed that Wolseley had been silent on the subject of South Africa between 1896 and June 1899.[10] This was manifestly untrue; Wolseley had been active during this period in seeking defensive plans from the officers in command in Natal and in Cape Colony. He had also written a memorandum to the P.U.S. on 20 April 1898 drawing his attention to Milner's recent communications on the danger posed by the Boer preparations. Wolseley had asked for reinforcements on that occasion 'to make the force there complete in all arms'.[11] Beyond this Wolseley had no need to request the despatch of more men to South Africa since the diplomatic situation appeared to be reasonably quiet and war likely only in the long term. The situation changed in June 1899 after the failure of the Bloemfontein Conference to reach a settlement between the Boers and the British over the franchise question. The events between June and the despatch of the First Army Corps in October will be examined later in this chapter.

The question of the apparent lack of plans of operations for South Africa should be considered in two parts; what preparations and plans were being drawn up in South Africa by the

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9 For more on Chamberlain's opinions see A.N. Porter, The Origins of the South African War, (Manchester 1980)

10 Elgin Commission, Q.21219, 21289

11 Wolseley to P.U.S., 20 April 1898 in Elgin Documents.

commanding officers on the spot, and what plans were being drawn up in the War Office. It must be remembered that it was common practice to leave defensive planning in the colonies to the officers in charge in the area, and for the War Office to approve or amend the plans when sent for their consideration. It was not the role of the War Office to draw up detailed plans without the information available to the men on the spot. In 1896 the G.O.C. in South Africa, Lieutenant-General Goodenough had sent plans to the War Office. In his memorandum he expressed most concern about the lines of communication and made suggestions on the numbers of men required to defend the vital road bridges over the Orange River and the railway junctions in the northern Cape Colony. His plan of defence for Natal also emphasised the protection of the lines of communication, particularly guarding Van Renen's Pass through the Biggarsburg from the Orange Free State into Natal.[12] Goodenough's plans were approved by Lansdowne in September 1897.

At the end of 1898 Wolseley was sufficiently concerned by the growth of Boer armaments to set up a committee at the War Office to draw up a list of questions on South African defence to be answered by the new G.O.C., Wolseley's friend, Butler.[13] Butler was undoubtedly not the man for the job; he was known in public to sympathise with the underdog whether it was the Irish against their English overlords, the Egyptian fighting to retain their independence from European financial interests, or the Boers seeking to retain their independence from the British yoke. Given Butler's attitude, there was little chance that he would respond favourably to the letter from the War Office. He wrote in his autobiography of his opinion at the time: 'I have full reason to think now that even at that time a section of people, including several prominent persons in the War Office, were at work to bring that war about at an early date'.[14] After much prodding, Butler sent a defence plan to the War Office in June 1899. This stressed that, in the event of war, the northern triangle of Natal could not be held against Boer forces. The main thrust of Butler's argument was that the authorities in Britain were underestimating the probable consequences of a war with the Transvaal. He believed that the Orange Free State would be drawn into the fight, and that British

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12 Memo. on the defence of South Africa, Goodenough, 30 Sept. 1896, WO32/6369; Goodenough to Ardagh, 14 July 1897, Elgin Documents

13 Stopford, AAG to Wolseley, 9 Dec. 1898; Stopford to Butler, 21 Dec. 1898, both in WO32/6369

14 Butler, p385

lines of communication would be threatened in the rear by a rising of the Cape Boers and the native tribes in Basutoland, Pondoland, and the Transkei. Butler was unhappy in his position in South Africa, and the War Office was none too pleased by his dilatoriness in sending a reply to its letter. On 4 July Butler resigned his post and was replaced by General Symons.[15]

There can be no doubt that Buller was sent out to South Africa with the First Army Corps before a final decision had been reached on what it should do. He told the Elgin Commission, 'there were no instructions, and I went out with a force based on the understanding that I was going to do a definite thing'.[16] The Commission blamed Wolseley for this unsatisfactory state of affairs, but it is clear that Lansdowne and the government were at fault on this question. If war is an extension of diplomacy by other means then it is essential that the military should know the state of diplomacy when drawing up their plans. In this case it was vital that the military should be informed as to the likely attitude to be adopted by the Orange Free State. Without this information detailed plans could not be drawn up for a campaign from either Natal or the Cape Colony. If the Orange Free State was to remain neutral then forces would still have to be stationed on the northern frontiers of the Cape to guard against any sabotage of the road bridges over the Orange River and the major railway junctions in the Cape by sympathisers with the Transvaal. The bulk of British forces would be despatched to Natal and use the passes through the Drakensburg to enter the Transvaal. The problems faced by crossing mountainous terrain would be different from those faced by the open country of the Orange Free State and the force would have to be composed with this in mind. If the Orange Free State was to join the Transvaal, then the British faced the option of either advancing from Natal or along the route favoured by Ardagh, from the Cape. With the Orange Free State hostile it would seem likely that the main force would advance from the Cape, but a substantial force would be required to hold the passes into Natal against large Boer raiding parties. Troops could not be switched between the Cape and Natal at short notice; no railway existed running through British territory linking the two colonies, and the sea conditions at the port of Durban were often such as to delay considerably any embarkation or disembarkation of men

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15 Plan for the defence of South Africa, Butler, 14 June 1899, WO32/6369; Pakenham, p76
16 Elgin Commission, Q.15402

and supplies. Therefore, if Wolseley was to fulfil his role in providing plans of defensive and offensive as laid down in the 1895 Order in Council, he had to receive notice from the politicians of the definite attitude of the Orange Free State.

In his first major memorandum on the immediate preparations for war on 8 June 1899, which will be referred to in greater detail later, Wolseley was under the impression that the Orange Free State would remain neutral since it was hosting the Bloemfontein Conference, which had opened on 31 May to discuss the franchise question. Given the state of current diplomacy, Wolseley recommended the adoption of the Natal route. He urged the collection of supplies at the Cape, in case the political situation changed, and at Pietermaritzburg in Natal.[17] It is interesting to note in the light of the later controversy over why Ladysmith was selected as the main base in Natal, that Wolseley at this stage selected Pietermaritzburg as the main supply dump. Also in June, Buller was informed that should it be necessary to despatch a British expeditionary force to South Africa, as seemed likely since the Bloemfontein Conference had broken up without agreement on 5 June, he would be appointed to the command. Buller was in favour of the railway route through the Orange Free State but Lansdowne refused to agree to this.[18] On 6 July, when Lansdowne and Buller met for the second time, Buller urged a decision to be taken on the Orange Free State but was again informed by Lansdowne that the Orange Free State must not be forced to take sides. The following day Wolseley pressed for a decision on this question without success. On 17 August Wolseley wrote to Lansdowne that, 'I do not see all the telegrams that pass between the Colonial Office and Sir A. Milner, but from those I have read I gather he is anxious about the weakness of the military force we now have in South Africa'. Wolseley shared Milner's fears about the possibility of a Dutch rising in the Cape and supported Milner's request for the despatch of two infantry battalions to the Cape to guard against this. From what he did know of the state of diplomacy, Wolseley formed the opinion that the Natal route would be used and that 10,000 men would be required in Natal urgently to prevent the Boers from talking the initiative and capturing Ladysmith and the northern triangle of Natal. He was strengthened in this belief by the

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17 Memo. on the military strength in South Africa, Wolseley, 8 June 1899, CAB37/50
18 G. Powell, Buller: A Scapegoat, (London, 1994) p116-120; Col. Everett, A.A.G. Intelligence to Wolseley, 3 July 1899, WO 32/6369

communication from Bloemfontein on 28 August that the Orange Free State would uphold its neutrality in any war between Britain and the Transvaal.[19]

The day before this communication was received in London Lansdowne and Wolseley had met to discuss the desirability of sending further reinforcements to South Africa. Wolseley was informed that 'you ought to be *in utrumque paratus*, with a plan for each contingency'.[20] Neither Wolseley nor Buller were satisfied with this complete disregard for the demands of offensive and defensive planning, and on 5 September Buller, with Wolseley's support, wrote a clearly worded memorandum to Salisbury. In this Buller argued that 'there must be some period at which the military and the diplomatic or political forces are brought into line, and in my view, this ought to be before action is determined on - or in other words, before the diplomat proceeds to an ultimatum the military should be in a position to enforce it'. The military could not be ready because 'I have never yet had the route fixed'. On the same day Wolseley had voiced similar concerns to Lansdowne:

> The Government are acting without complete knowledge of what the military can do, while the military authorities on their side are equally without full knowledge of what the Government expects them to do; nor are they given authority to make such antecedent preparations as will enable them to act with the least possible delay.[21]

Vital time had been lost, and Wolseley urged a delay in the break of relations between the Transvaal and Britain for at least five or six weeks to collect a substantial force in Natal. On 16 September Wolseley suggested that the choice of routes should be left to Buller and that he would probably choose to advance through the Orange Free State.[22] At last Lansdowne accepted the need for a definite decision and informed the Cabinet on 25 September that this decision must be taken now and that the recent pronouncements of the president of the Orange Free State, Steyn, suggested that the State would be hostile. Lansdowne concluded, 'after all that has taken place, the Orange Free State will scarcely have a right to complain if it has to choose between treatment as

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19 Buller to Lansdowne, 6 July 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 7 July 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 17 Aug. 1899, Lansdowne to Wolseley, 20 Aug. 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 24 Aug. 1899, all in CAB37/50

20 'Prepared for both'. Lansdowne to Wolseley, 27 Aug. 1899, CAB37/50

21 Buller to Salisbury, 5 Sept. 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 5 Sept. 1899, both in CAB 37/50; Buller to Wolseley, 7 Sept. 1899, Buller Papers, Devon Record Office, 2065M/SS4/14

22 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 16 Sept. 1899, Elgin Documents

an open adversary and an explicit undertaking of neutrality'.[23] Two days later the Orange Free State concluded an alliance with the Transvaal. Wolseley told the Elgin Commission that 'I find that even as late as 28 September 1899 I asked the government - that is, the Secretary of State - officially to be informed of the intentions of the Orange Free State, and I cannot remember having ever received any positive reply upon that point'.[24]

The Elgin Commission accepted without question Lansdowne's assertion that Wolseley had not based his various memoranda calling for the despatch of reinforcements to South Africa on the intelligence reports that he, Wolseley, had received.[25] These requests were numerous and, although it is true that Wolseley did not refer explicitly to intelligence reports in his memoranda, it should have been clear to Lansdowne that Wolseley had some justification for his demands. For example, in February 1896, when outlining his proposals for a substantial increase to the size of the home army, Wolseley had urged the despatch of two additional battalions to the garrison of South Africa as part of the general army scheme being drawn up. In November Wolseley's request was given strength by Chamberlain who drew the attention of the Cabinet to the increase in the purchase of arms by the Boers and asked for the doubling of the number of troops stationed in South Africa to 10,000 men. The motives of both men were to show the Boers that Britain was serious about upholding the terms of the 1884 London Convention, and to warn them not to go too far in their drive towards complete independence. However, Chamberlain was not prepared to press his case if such an increase to the South African establishment would require either more men in the army or more money.[26]

Throughout 1897 and 1898 intelligence reports urged that more men be sent to South Africa but the government did not accept that war was likely in the immediate future. Besides there were no men to spare; the army was being increased dramatically at the time and efficient soldiers were required to train the recruits, and in 1898 Britain had to supply troops both for the Sudan campaign and the Cretan emergency. Nevertheless, in a memorandum in April 1898,

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[23] Memo. on South Africa, Lansdowne, 25 Sept. 1899, CAB37/51
[24] Elgin Commission, Q.8703
[25] Elgin Commission, Q.21289
[26] Memo. on the efficiency of the Regular Army, Wolseley, 22 Feb. 1896, WO33/56; Memo. on South Africa, Chamberlain, 10 Nov. 1896, CAB37/43

Wolseley made a proposal which could have been adopted by the government with little risk. He drew attention to the fact that no number of men in South Africa could defend the British colonies unless they were mobile and well supplied. To this end Wolseley suggested the accumulation of supplies, stores and transport for one regiment of cavalry, four batteries of artillery, 120 mounted infantry, and one battalion of infantry at Ladysmith. He also wanted the purchase of mules to begin since a vast number would be required and the Boers would be competing for the limited supply.[27] The government refused to adopt these moderate proposals and this refusal demonstrated its misunderstanding of the likely nature of war in South Africa and of the necessity for any offensive force to be highly mobile.

The failure of the Bloemfontein Conference made war more likely and consequently Wolseley urged immediate preparation with increasing urgency. These preparations fall into four overlapping categories: proposals to force the Boers back to the negotiating table; the secret collection of men and stores in South Africa to facilitate the defence of Natal and the Cape without damaging the process of diplomacy; overtly sending more men to South Africa to prevent the initiative passing to the Boers in the event of war; and, finally, the mobilisation and despatch of the First Army Corps from England. Lansdowne's general attitude towards the proposals of his military colleagues deserves attention. He had obtained a large sum of money for the expansion of the army in 1897 and had obtained a Military Loan for various military works. Consequently he was unwilling to ask the Cabinet for more money to pay for preparations for a war which might never occur. Furthermore he misunderstood the thinking behind the requests for reinforcements. He told the Elgin Commission, 'I am not a soldier, but I have never heard of sending out reinforcements to a country which might become a theatre of war merely in order that the reinforcements might successfully defend themselves against attack; they are sent there, I imagine, for the purpose of securing something or somebody'.[28] It appears, therefore, that even after the war Lansdowne failed to realise the weakness of the British forces in Natal and Cape Colony, and their inability to defend British territory against Boer incursions without reinforcements.

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27 Memo. on South Africa, Wolseley, 20 April 1898, Elgin Documents
28 Elgin Commission, Q.21170

On 8 June, three days after the last indecisive meeting of the Bloemfontein Conference, Wolseley wrote a memorandum for Lansdowne on the military strength in South Africa. He anticipated that, in the event of war, Britain would have to send the entire First Army Corps, one cavalry division, one battalion of mounted infantry, and four infantry battalions for the lines of communication. He proposed the immediate mobilisation of the First Army Corps on Salisbury Plain without calling out the Army Reserve because 'it might probably wake up the Transvaal to the fact that England was at last serious, and by doing so prevent war altogether'. Wolseley did not believe this mobilisation would precipitate a war since neither the Boers nor the British would take the field until October when there would be sufficient grazing for animals. In addition Wolseley urged other measures which could be done more or less in secret without damaging diplomatic negotiations, such as the despatch of three companies of the Army Service Corps, and three field companies of Royal Engineers to strengthen the weak areas in the South African establishment. In addition he argued that the purchase and collection of large quantities of supplies and mules should be sanctioned immediately.[29] The Cabinet was shown Wolseley's memorandum, and on 20 June Salisbury reported to the Queen that the Cabinet had 'resolved that the moment had not come for sending reinforcements; but that for the present quieter preparations should be pushed forward'. In July the War Office sent more artillery, engineers and departmental corps to South Africa; Butler was authorised to purchase mules for transport, and special service officers were sent out to raise companies of men in South Africa to defend specific locations. On 7 July Wolseley again repeated his proposal for the mobilisation of the Army Corps on Salisbury Plain and requested a Vote of Credit for the purchase of supplies but he failed to achieve either of these things.[30]

On 13 July the Commander-in-Chief's committee to consider questions relating to operations in South Africa began its meetings.[31] This committee served two basic functions:

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29 Memo. on the military strength in South Africa, Wolseley, 8 June 1899, CAB37/50

30 Salisbury to Queen, 20 June, 1899, in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, p384; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 7 July 1899, CAB37/50

31 This committee was established on 13 July 1899 as the Commander-in-Chief's committee to consider questions relating to operations in South Africa. The membership was wider than that of the Army Board. On 11 September it was renamed the proceedings of the Army Board for mobilisation purposes, still with a

firstly, it facilitated communications between the departments in the War Office to a greater extent than Wolseley felt could be achieved by the Army Board though the membership of the committee was similar; and, secondly, Wolseley could use the committee to present Lansdowne with definite proposals which, by demonstrating that they had the support of the whole military side of the War Office, would carry more strength than proposals made by Wolseley alone. The principal issue facing the committee was how to get as many men as possible into South Africa in the period before the government would accept the need for the mobilisation and despatch of the First Army Corps.

On 18 July the committee met to examine Lansdowne's proposal to reinforce South Africa immediately by taking a brigade from India. The committee reported that it was 'unanimously of opinion that the whole force should be sent from home'.[32] Given Wolseley's poor opinion of the quality of troops in India based on his experiences of over forty years previously it is hardly surprising that he denigrated any suggestion for their use in South Africa. He told Lansdowne that the men would come from India 'sodden with drink, fever, and venereal'. Furthermore Wolseley remembered that it had been two British battalions returning from India, 60th Rifles and the 92nd, who had lost Majuba.[33] Lansdowne, on the other had, had been Viceroy just before becoming Secretary of State for War and believed that the British Army in India was thoroughly reformed and as capable of sustaining a defence against Boer raids before the main British force arrived as reinforcements from Britain would be. In August the committee added a further argument against the use of Indian troops - India could not spare them. Wolseley was on solid ground with this argument: throughout the 1880s India had increased its demand for British battalions and drafts, usually to the detriment of the efficiency of the home army, but now it appeared that India had troops to spare. In fact the Viceroy had, on 7 July, only offered the service of these troops until the end of the year. This, Wolseley's committee argued, was a pointless gesture since once the time spent at sea was deducted from this period, the force from India would serve in South Africa

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wide membership. On 11 June 1900 the committee was abolished and the Army Board took over its functions. WO163/612

[32] Meetings of the Commander-in-Chief's committee, 18 & 21 July, 31 Aug. 1899, WO163/612

[33] Wolseley to Lansdowne, 2 Aug. 1899 in Elgin Documents

for only two and a half months, which was an insufficient period to weigh against the cost of their transportation. In August Wolseley put forward yet another argument against the use of troops from India: 'We are quite able to supply all that is or may be required from home, and it would create an impression that our home army was so inefficient that we could not find from it the small numbers required for South Africa'.[34]

The opposition to Lansdowne's proposal was so strong that the decision on whether to accept the Viceroy's offer was postponed. Nevertheless Wolseley continued to press for the immediate despatch of reinforcements to South Africa, in particular to Natal. In a memorandum on 17 August he urged the immediate despatch of an infantry division, a cavalry regiment, and two brigade divisions of artillery, which totalled 10,000 men.[35] In reply Lansdowne pointed out that Chamberlain believed that the political position in South Africa was improving and that the immediate necessity for reinforcements had passed, but that nevertheless Lansdowne accepted the figure of 10,000 men for Natal's defence. These, he repeated, should come from India because, should Orange Free State prove hostile, the entire Army Corps could advance from the Cape secure in the knowledge that a division from outside the Army Corps was defending Natal, and would therefore not need to be split. Wolseley's reply referred to his ignorance of the state of diplomacy:

> Your note of the 20th is written in so hopeful a spirit of peace in South Africa that I assume the Cabinet has information on the subject not known to the press. To judge of the matters there from the daily papers, it would seem that every preparation is being made by Mr. Kruger for war, and that he is striving to force a war policy upon the Orange Free State also... At this moment we are not locally prepared for war in South Africa, so that if it comes upon us under present circumstances we shall surrender the initiative to Kruger.[36]

Wolseley had informed Lansdowne that there would be a gap of three or four months between the date when the Army Corps was mobilised and when it could start its campaign in South Africa. The Cabinet had been informed of this fact in early August but appeared to disregard its possible consequences.

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34 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 24 Aug. 1899, CAB37/50. India did not get its division back by the end of 1899 because it had become besieged in Ladysmith.
35 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 17 Aug. 1899, CAB37/50
36 Lansdowne to Wolseley, 20 Aug. 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 24 Aug. 1899, both in CAB37/50

In September events sped up. On 5 September the Transvaal Government had withdrawn its proposal of 22 August to offer the five year franchise conditionally. The Cabinet Council met on 8 September and sent its refusal to accept this to the Transvaal on the same day. It also ordered the Viceroy to despatch troops to South Africa. Wolseley had been left ignorant of these negotiations and on 8 and 28 September he urged Lansdowne 'postpone by diplomacy for one month at least any overt act of hostility on the part of the Transvaal'. He informed the government in no uncertain terms that 'we have lost time,' and that he and his colleagues had already worked out the details of what force was required and its commanders. On 8 September he recommended General White to be second in command to Buller, with General Hunter as the Chief of Staff. He pointed out that although the staff and generals selected to command divisions and brigades had been decided the men concerned had not been informed that they might be sent to South Africa.[37]

Not only were there an insufficient number of men in Natal for its defence but delays in obtaining sanction for the purchase of mules made the existing force immobile. As Wolseley complained to Ardagh on 23 September:

> I have had officers there some weeks ready to buy but could not induce a Cabinet composed of men who are as ignorant, <u>one and all</u> of war and its requirements or how to carry it on as I am of abstruse theology. I am sick of urging a set of foolish men, whom by the by I can only approach through Lansdowne, for he takes care that I have no access to them, to buy the mule wagons and harnesses we shall want for war, but to no purpose.[38]

The Cabinet had now given Wolseley permission to spend £64,000 on specified items but he believed this was too little too late. Lansdowne agreed with Wolseley's concern over how to find a sufficient number of mules so quickly, he complained to Salisbury 'will no one invent a "motor mule"?'[39] The fears of the military that time had run out were to be realised; on 27 September the Transvaal forces were called out, but it was not until 7 October that the Army Reserve was mobilised and Buller did not leave till a week later, after the Boers had entered Natal.

The events of Black Week, when the Boers invested Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking, were a major shock to the British public. The Elgin Commission examined all relevant

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37 Pakenham, p91; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 8 Sept. 1899, CAB37/50; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 28 Sept. 1899, Elgin Documents

38 Wolseley to Ardagh, 23 Sept. 1899, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/3

39 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 1 Sept. 1899, Salisbury Papers

witnesses on the question of how the siege of Ladysmith had occurred and attempted to discover who made the decision to base a large number of troops in such an unsuitable location. Ladysmith was situated on the main railway running through Natal but because it was situated in a hollow it was an unsuitable location for a sustained defence against the Boers. Wolseley realised this from the start and told the Commission 'no one ever thought that the [British] troops would occupy Ladysmith. The district in front of Ladysmith is called Biggarsburg, a very strong position'.[40] Natal was difficult to defend because its northern apex was surrounded by Boer territory on both sides. The Governor of Natal, Sir William Hely-Hutchinson was adamant that all of Natal should be defended since the voluntary abandonment of any territory, particularly the strategic coal fields at Dundee, could trigger a native uprising. Wolseley accepted the validity of these arguments, and was therefore content to accept the proposals from Natal for the stationing of limited numbers of troops at Dundee and Glencoe, and for the accumulation of stores for these men at Ladysmith. However, he did not believe that if the Boers invaded in any great numbers that the Biggarsburg positions could be held. If they could not be held, then he expected the British forces to fall back on Colenso and behind the Tugela River where the terrain was more suitable for sustained defensive operations.[41]

Butler had suggested much the same tactics in his defence plan of June 1899, but his successor General Symons had accepted Hely-Hutchinson's arguments and left troops at Dundee even when it was clear that the Boers were about to invade. In The Times History of the War L.S. Amery suggested that 'the keystone to the whole scheme was the assumption that Sir G. White could hold his own in Natal for an indefinite length of time. That assumption gave way at the very outset and the great army corps had to be broken up to stop the gap which the scheme overlooked'.[42] Amery was incorrect in suggesting that an oversight had been made by British military planners; Wolseley had consistently urged that the troops should fall back on the Tugela as soon as the Boer opposition became too strong to maintain the forward positions. White had been left in charge of British forces in Natal after Symons's death at the battle of Talana and

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40 Elgin Commission, Q.8875, 8862-72
41 Pakenham, p147
42 Amery, Times History, p103 & 466

should have withdrawn the troops to the Tugela. White told the Elgin Commission he had not done so because he did not know if any defensive positions had been prepared behind the Tugela.[43] It can be argued that even with this doubt it would have been better for White to have withdrawn his division rather than be besieged in Ladysmith which was so obviously unsuitable for defence. Wolseley's description of White's predicament shows his lack of sympathy: White made 'the infernal mistake of allowing himself to be cut off'.[44]

The next section of this chapter will examine aspects of the Boer War relevant to Wolseley. In The Times History Amery commented that 'Lord Wolseley, who throughout his career at the War Office had devoted his special care to mobilisation, could be well satisfied with the result of his work'.[45] Wolseley was, and in a memorandum in January 1900 he wrote:

> I have no hesitation in saying that no army has ever left our shores composed of finer soldiers than those of which our army now in South Africa consists. All are seasoned men. There are no recruits or youths under 20 years of age among them. Had we not possessed the Army Reserve... it would have been impossible to have sent to South Africa the Regular Army now serving there... Some weak points have been discovered and they will be at once rectified; but although this is the first time we have ever called out our whole Army Reserve we have every reason to be satisfied with the rapidity and ease with which this mobilisation of our army was effected.[46]

Mobilisation did progress smoothly in the early months of the war. On 20 October the first infantry transports sailed with the First Army Corps. On 11 November the 5th Infantry Division was mobilised after Buller had sent Gatacre's division to Natal once it was clear that telegraph communications with the Indian Division under General White had been cut, and Ladysmith was besieged. This mobilisation of one division was less than Wolseley had hoped for; in his memorandum of 3 November he had urged the mobilisation of the whole Second Army Corps. However, the difficulties encountered in supplying the men with uniforms and equipment coupled with the government's reluctance to send more troops to South Africa than it thought necessary meant that mobilisation continued by division.[47] The 6th Division was mobilised on 11 December

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[43] Elgin Commission, Q.14767
[44] Wolseley to George Wolseley, 23 Nov. 1899, Duke University
[45] Amery, Times History, p113
[46] Memo. on the war in South Africa, Wolseley, 30 Jan. 1900, CAB37/51
[47] Memo. on the war in South Africa, Lansdowne, 30 Oct. 1899, CAB37/51; memo. on the Boer War, Wolseley, 1 & 3 Nov. 1899, both in Elgin Documents

and the 7th two days later. By then the War Office was facing a serious problem: it was running out of trained soldiers.

As early as 30 September Wolseley had pointed out to Lansdowne that, once the troops under orders for South Africa had embarked, there would be only 38½ battalions of the Foot Guards and infantry of the line, and 36 batteries of artillery left in Britain and that therefore immediate steps had to be taken to strengthen the home army. He pointed out that 'our Army organisation provides for the contingency now before us': 37 Militia battalions should be called out to compensate for the absence of 37 line battalions in South Africa, the remaining cavalry regiments and artillery batteries should be raised to war establishment, and no further drafts sent to battalions serving abroad other than in South Africa. Lansdowne agreed with these proposals although there was some dispute as to the exact number of Militia battalions to be called out.[48]

Any organisation, however perfectly functioning, could only be stretched so far. By the end of 1899 it was clear that Britain was running out of troops while the demands for men from South Africa showed no signs of diminishing. Furthermore there was also the danger that either France or Russia or both countries might seize the opportunity given by Britain's absorption in the war in South Africa to attack British interests. The fear of French action formed the background to Wolseley's proposals put to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet at the end of December 1899 and expanded on in a memorandum written on 29 December and reissued with minor amendments on 3 January 1900. He reminded the Cabinet that in 1888 it had been decided that the minimum force for home defence had been settled as two regular Army Corps and further one composed of the Militia, and that therefore in addition to the force then in South Africa Britain needed 42,500 men and 1,270 officers. These Wolseley proposed to find by bringing back more battalions from Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon and Halifax, raising more recruits and encouraging former soldiers to re-enlist. He pointed out that according to the March 1896 estimate of the number of discharged soldiers in the United Kingdom there were 287,000 men under the age of 44 of whom Wolseley thought 170,000 would be of fighting age.[49]

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48 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 30 Sept. 1899, Lansdowne to Wolseley, 12 Oct. 1899, Wolseley to Lansdowne, 30 Oct. 1899, Wolseley to P.U.S., 31 Oct. 1899, Lansdowne to Wolseley, 31 Oct. 1899, all in WO32/6359

49 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 29 Dec. 1899, CAB37/51; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 3 Jan. 1900, WO32/6360

These proposals were of such a serious nature that Lansdowne thought that it was essential to explore their practicability before presenting them to the Cabinet. He believed that the proposals needed to be considered under two headings: what should be the permanent increase to the size of the army; and what immediate steps were necessary for the war in South Africa.[50] The Military Secretary, Grove, thought that the main problem would be to find a sufficient number of officers, and that the solution might be to offer a number of one year commissions and to take Marine officers into the army. The Adjutant General, Wood, thought that a large bounty would need to be offered to obtain the men. He was convinced that the Militia would be sufficiently trained to repel invasion in October which was generally accepted as the most likely time for such an enterprise to be launched by France. The Quartermaster General reported that housing such a vast number of men would be virtually impossible. The Director General of Ordnance, Brackenbury, commented in detail on the stores of equipment and clothing and pointed out that ordnance would be a major problem unless orders were placed immediately.[51] Having received these responses, Lansdowne replied to Wolseley's memorandum on 17 January. He suggested that Wolseley was over-optimistic on the numbers of old soldiers who would come forward, and argued that 'the difficulty of getting officers for 32 new battalions would, I believe, be prohibitory'. Therefore existing resources must be depended on for the present war. He accepted the need to increase the size of the army permanently by 12 battalions, and proposed raising them by a combination of raw recruits and veterans. However, Wolseley's recommendations for urgent increases in the cavalry, engineers, and departmental troops would be put into practice immediately. The Defence Committee of the Cabinet approved Lansdowne's proposals on 20 January.[52]

Wolseley was unhappy at the way the Cabinet had treated his recommendations. He pointed out that once the 7th Division had left only 23 battalions would remain, and this figure plus the 12 battalions to be raised and the three already sanctioned gave a total of 38; 'I take it therefore that I am justified in assuming that this number represents what the Defence Committee

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50 Lansdowne to Clarke, 6 Jan. 1900, WO32/6360

51 Memo. by Grove, 6 Jan., memo. by Wood, 8 Jan., memo. by Brackenbury, 9 Jan., memo. by Clarke, 9 Jan. 1900 all in WO32/6360

52 Lansdowne to Wolseley, 17 Jan. 1900, CAB37/52; meeting of the defence committee, 20 Jan., 1900, WO32/6360

consider necessary for safety'.[53] Wolseley wanted to ensure that, should France successfully invade Britain, he had written confirmation that the Cabinet had considered that Britain was adequately defended, against the contrary opinion of the Commander-in-Chief. On 27 January Lansdowne informed Wolseley again that the Cabinet refused to sanction the raising of the 21 new battalions Wolseley wanted, but was prepared to raise more veterans for one year's service for home defence. These were called the Royal Reserve Battalions and approved by the Queen in February. Wolseley threatened to resign over the question of the number of battalions to be raised but was persuaded not to by his colleagues and Lansdowne.[54]

In June 1899 Wolseley had suggested the use of a fertile source of possible soldiers, the colonies, and he had advocated asking the Australian colonies and New Zealand for contingents of men. In July and September these colonies offered their services. Initially, apart from Wolseley, the War Office was lukewarm about these men who it was thought would not be trained or amenable to discipline. Wolseley wanted them because he predicted the need for irregular troops who could guard the lines of communication, thereby releasing British battalions for the fighting, and to act as mounted infantry, of which large numbers would be required to cover the veldt.[55] In the event contingents from the colonies did serve in South Africa and their services were welcomed by the authorities there though their expense was not.

A further source of troops was the existing Volunteer movement. Wolseley had had little to do with the Volunteer movement directly during his career at the War Office, but he had been a great publicist for it, making numerous speeches to various Volunteer units. He did not consider that their training made them adequate to face a determined enemy but accepted their role as the third line of defence against invasion after the Navy and the regular army. The terms governing the Volunteer movement subjected them to service only at home, but nevertheless the patriotism of some commanding officers, such as Colonel E. Balfour of the London Scottish and Colonel H.

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53 Memo. on the strength of the British Army, Wolseley, 23 Jan. 1900, WO32/6360

54 Memo. on the establishment, Lansdowne, 27 Jan. 1900, ibid.; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 11 Feb. 1900, Maurice Papers, 2/2/46; Bigge to Wolseley, 17 Feb. 1900, Lansdowne to Queen, 29 Jan. 1900, both in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, pp489-90, 470-1

55 Memo. on the military strength in South Africa, Wolseley, 8 June 1899, CAB37/50; Amery, Times History, p116

Vincent of the Queen's Westminsters, led to them offering the War Office the services of their regiments abroad. Initially the Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces, Major-General Kelly-Kenny and the Adjutant General, Evelyn Wood, refused to accept the Volunteers for service in South Africa. The events of Black Week in December forced the authorities in the War Office to change their opinions and Wolseley was particularly keen to use the Volunteers abroad.

On 15 December the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Alfred Newton offered to raise the 1st City of London Volunteers on a scheme devised by Colonel C.G. Boxhill. Lansdowne signalled his agreement and Wolseley gave Newton unofficial permission to proceed with the raising of a contingent of 1,000 men. These were formed into one infantry battalion, two mounted infantry companies and one horse artillery battery. They were despatched to South Africa in January 1900 and a further draft was sent In July. Other measures for utilising the Volunteers were put into practice. Service companies were formed to join the Army Reserve to serve at home but able to proceed to South Africa if needed. Volunteer engineer and medical units were also encouraged to offer their services. In the case of the medical corps they released doctors of the Army Medical Staff Corps for service in South Africa where they were very urgently needed. The Volunteers arrived in South Africa after Kimberley and Ladysmith had been relieved but did take part in the advance on Pretoria and fought two actions at Doornkop and Diamond Hill. Their efficiency was praised by their commander Major-General Smith-Dorrien.[56]

The Yeomanry was probably the weakest branch of the British military system. It was under-manned and under-trained and little attention had been paid towards improving this state of affairs. On 16 December Buller sent a telegram after the battle of Colenso asking for 8,000 mounted men to be sent to South Africa urgently. No large units of mounted infantry existed in the British Army so Lansdowne proposed to create a new body, the Imperial Yeomanry out of existing Yeomanry regiments and to recruit able horsemen from the general public. Wolseley disagreed with this proposal, and on 28 December wrote to the P.U.S.:

> I am very anxious to supply the GOC in South Africa with 8000 trained men accustomed to some sort of discipline; but to go to the highways and byways and pick up any civilians who will volunteer to go to South Africa quite regardless of

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56 Beckett, Riflemen Form, p211-14

> whether they have ever learnt even the rudiments of discipline, and to form these into companies or battalions... is, according to my knowledge of war, a dangerous experiment.

Lansdowne replied that Wolseley was exaggerating the problem since Wood had drawn up a list of strict qualifications for membership of the Imperial Yeomanry. Wolseley claimed that he had no previous knowledge of the scheme, but there is evidence to suggest that he had seen Wood's minute of 23 December giving details of the recruitment and organisation of the Imperial Yeomanry.[57] The Imperial Yeomanry served efficiently on the lines of communication, thereby releasing more regulars for service at the front, but their horsemastership was appalling, and many horses suffered under their care.

Britain not only suffered from a shortage of men with which to fight a major war far from home but was also desperately short of equipment. Wolseley's concern with the state of British armaments, equipment and uniforms had been spasmodic throughout his career. He had been instrumental in winning the soldier a practical fighting dress but had shown little interest in the quantity of such uniforms held in store. In April 1899 provision had been made for the supply of 40,000 sets of khaki drill. In August the medical authorities recommended serge as the most suitable for use in South Africa. This late change meant a shortage of uniforms for the divisions which followed the First Army Corps to South Africa. Wolseley cannot be blamed for this shortfall particularly since demand rapidly outgrew previously predicted wartime requirements. The British Army was also woefully short of rifle ammunition during the war. No one person could be blamed for this state of affairs since part of the problem was caused by the decision of the 1899 Hague Conference to ban the use of Dum Dum bullets; consequently the 66 million bullets of this type in British reserves could not be sent to South Africa.[58]

On the question of armaments, particularly the provision of heavy guns, Wolseley had spoken on the subject of Britain's obsolete artillery in the late 1880s during the invasion scares. There is little evidence to suggest that he showed much interest in the subject later. As Commander-in-Chief Wolseley was far more concerned with obtaining an increase in the size of

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57 Wolseley to P.U.S., 28 Dec. 1899, Lansdowne to Wolseley, 30 Dec. 1899, memo. on the Yeomanry, Wood, 23 Dec. 1899, all in WO32/7866

58 Dunlop, p87; Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p320-1

the army than in equipping it with the most modern armament, particularly the new quick-firing guns. When Brackenbury was appointed Director General of Ordnance early in 1899 he was asked by Lansdowne to undertake a thorough survey of British armaments. Events overtook Brackenbury's project, but on 15 December he wrote a detailed memorandum for Wolseley explaining the existing stores and what the ordnance factories and trade could produce. The picture showed the extent to which the provision of modern armaments had been neglected over the years. Brackenbury concluded, 'the above is, I submit, sufficient to prove that we are attempting to maintain the largest Empire the world has ever seen with armaments and reserves that would be insufficient for a third class military Power'.[59] The result was that many orders were placed for heavy guns, ammunition, gun carriages, etc., with the ordnance factories, trade, and abroad. These orders would not be filled for some time especially since the order books of foreign manufacturers Krupps and Creuzot were already full. In order to avoid such a critical state of affairs recurring in the future an interdepartmental committee was set up under Sir Francis Mowatt, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, to examine Britain's future requirements and ability to fulfil them.[60] The main discussion and practical application of the recommendations of this committee occurred after Wolseley had left the War Office.

The following section of this chapter will examine which aspects of the conduct of the British Army in the Boer War reflected on Wolseley. It will not go into detail of the battles fought nor of the performance of individual brigades beyond what is needed to illustrate various points concerning Wolseley. Firstly the performance of the staff officers will be examined, followed by some comments on the fighting performance of the British soldier.

The staff appointed to commands in the Boer War should have been the best staff sent on any British expedition since most had been through the Staff College. But contemporary commentators had little to say in praise of the staff or the senior regimental officers, for example, Amery commented that

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59 Proceedings of the mobilisation committee, 14 Dec. 1899, WO163/612; memo. on the Ordnance Branch, Brackenbury, 15 Dec. 1899, Elgin Documents; Wolseley to Lansdowne, 29 Dec. 1899, CAB37/51; memo. on the Ordnance Branch, Brackenbury, 9 Jan. 1900, WO32/6360

60 Memo. on the state of artillery, Ardagh, 20 Jan. 1900, PRO30/40/14; report of the inter-departmental committee on the reserves of guns, etc., 31 March 1900, WO33/163

> The course of the war showed that among our generals were to be found a few leaders of boldness, tactical insight and organising power, and it had brought to the front many more who at its outbreak were unknown junior officers. But it also revealed the fact that many of our generals, who had risen simply by seniority, were nothing more than rather aged regimental officers.[61]

This opinion was shared by Wolseley. While a commander in the field he had encouraged the rise of able junior officers above their less efficient seniors. In the War Office he had been at the forefront of the campaign for the introduction of selection to senior regimental positions and staff appointments. Wolseley had achieved some success in this area, as revealed in the previous chapter, but the new provisions had had too little time to take effect before the outbreak of war.

Major Cairns who had served under Buller argued that: 'One after another have the pets of the War Office, the men arrogantly styling themselves "of the modern school", proved their hopeless incapacity for the leadership of troops in the field; time and again have the very men to whose hands has been entrusted the training of the British army for war, shown that they who are unfit to command are unfit to train'.[62] This implied a direct criticism of Wolseley and the men whose careers he had nurtured at the War Office. It is often difficult to determine exactly who appointed certain officers but, nevertheless, some of Wolseley's choices can be identified, and it is also of interest to compare the staff structure set up in peacetime with the staff organisation sent to war. The weakness of the staff had serious consequences; Roberts sacked five generals, six cavalry brigadiers, one infantry brigadier, five commanding officers of cavalry regiments and four commanding officers of infantry battalions.[63]

The first senior officer to be considered must be Buller as the commander of the First Army Corps. Buller had performed well in the Aldershot command to which he had been appointed in October 1898 and had issued many memoranda on tactics while there. It is not clear whether Wolseley put Buller's name forward for the command of the First Army Corps to Lansdowne or whether it was the other way round. It may have been assumed that, because the majority of units forming the First Army Corps were stationed at Aldershot, the appointment of its peacetime commander for war was apparently obvious. But Buller was not the man for the job and

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61 Amery, Times History, pp37-8
62 Capt. W.E. Cairns, The Absent-Minded War, (London 1900) p11
63 Elgin Commission, Q.10520

he did not want it. Lyttelton, who was present at a meeting at the War Office between Wolseley and Buller, noted that Buller had 'expressed very strong objections to accepting the command, said he was sick of South Africa, and if he was forced to go out would come away as soon as he could'.[64] Given Buller's state of mind Wolseley should have looked for an alternative commander, but Britain appeared to be so short of able men that he would have had difficulties doing this. Despite the shortcomings of Buller's performance in South Africa, Wolseley remained faithful to his friend. Wolseley knew nothing of the scheming between Roberts and Lansdowne which increased in tempo after Buller's repeated failures to relieve Ladysmith and the controversial telegram recommending its surrender. Therefore, when Roberts's appointment was made public on 18 December, it came as a complete shock to Wolseley, and he thought that Buller would and ought to resign immediately.[65] Buller, however, knew his own weaknesses and accepted that he could probably perform better when in command only in Natal, leaving Roberts to follow the line of campaign originally proposed by Buller from the Cape.

When the composition of the staff for the expeditionary force was being drawn up Wolseley had advocated the appointments of certain men. For example, he wrote to Buller in September strongly recommending the services of Sir George White as Buller's second in command. Later Wolseley was so angry with White after he had failed to remove his division from Ladysmith in time that he recommended to Lansdowne that White should be removed from his command, but Lansdowne declined to do this.[66] Once Buller was forced to go to White's rescue in Natal, Methuen was left in charge of the advance on Kimberley. Neither Wolseley nor Lansdowne thought Methuen capable of 'an almost independent command', and Wolseley advocated sending Grenfell from his command in Malta to South Africa. Lansdowne favoured Kitchener, but noted in a letter to Salisbury that Wolseley 'doubted S. Africa being big enough for Buller and Kitchener,

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[64] Lyttelton, p200-1

[65] Roberts to Lansdowne, 25 April 1897, asking for the South African command, Newton, p146; Roberts to Lansdowne, 8 Dec. 1899, Newton, p161; Lansdowne to Salisbury, 10 Dec. 1899, Salisbury Papers; Wolseley to Bigge, 14 Dec. 1899 in Buckle, Vol. 3, 3rd series, p433. The Queen complained to Balfour that neither she nor Wolseley had been consulted on the appointment of Roberts. Balfour told Bigge that 'it was impossible to consult the Commander-in-Chief upon such an appointment, as his well-known jealousy of Roberts made his advice on such a subject perfectly worthless'. Balfour to Salisbury, 19 Dec. 1899 quoted in G.H.L. Le May, British Supremacy in South Africa, (Oxford 1965) p44-5

[66] Wolseley to Buller, 7 Sept. 1899, Buller Papers, 2065M/SS4/14

both being "masterful men".'[67] Lyttelton drew up the list of the staff for the expeditionary force. He excluded Gatacre, whose performance in the Sudan had not impressed Lyttelton, but Wolseley included him. Gatacre was sacked and sent home by Roberts after Reddesburg for his failures in command. The justice of this action lies outside the scope of this thesis but it is interesting to note that Lord Esher told the King in 1903 that Gatacre had never been given the opportunity, which should have been afforded to a senior staff officer, to state his case to Roberts at the time.[68]

Arnold-Forster commented that 'much would have been gained if the higher commands were assigned in peace to those likely to exercise them in war'.[69] This was clearly not the case, and Wolseley must bear much of the blame. Because of the constant updating of mobilisation arrangements lists of staff for the First Army Corps were in existence at the War Office, and the officers concerned mostly held the positions in peace that they were intended to occupy in war. But as Lyttelton noted, 'Wolseley had a liking for what may be called "fancy" brigades, Scotch, Irish and Light Infantry, consequently few brigades went out as they stood'.[70] The consequences were predictably disastrous, and much delay in the progress of the field force must have been caused by the time needed for the new staff organisation to learn to work together. In his evidence to the Elgin Commission, General Hildyard said that 'he believed that the brigade which he commanded [the 2nd] was the only one which went out as a brigade and had been trained as a brigade at Aldershot under its old commander before its embarkation, and said that much advantage was derived from this fact'.[71] There was no justification for Wolseley's interference in previously made arrangements other than his arrogant belief that he knew the best structure for the British Army and its best senior officers.

During 1900 Wolseley played a less active role in the War Office side of the war in South Africa. Part of the reason for this may be his increasing ill-health, but part must be assumed to be his anger at the appointment of Roberts. When it became clear that Buller was not performing as

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67 Lansdowne to Salisbury, 3 & 8 Nov. 1899, Salisbury Papers

68 Lyttelton, p200; Esher to Brett, 25 Feb. 1903 in M.V. Brett, (ed.) Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, (London 1934) p381

69 Arnold-Forster, War Office, p81. Arnold-Forster listed the previous appointments of the principal staff officers on the expeditionary force.

70 Lyttelton, p200

71 Elgin Commission, Q.15973-6

well as expected Wolseley offered his services as a commander in the field, but there was no chance that this would be accepted given Wolseley's position in London and his health. He was furious that Roberts, who was a year older than him, was considered fit for active command. He remained critical of Roberts's performance, particularly the delay caused in the main advance by Roberts's and Kitchener's reorganisation of the transport service. While Roberts was on his way home to succeed Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief Wolseley wrote to his brother George: 'the war in South Africa is said to be over, but the fighting is certainly not over, & our friend little Bobs is bound to be found out as a charlatan sooner or later in all that relates to this war'.[72] Roberts returned to great public accolade whereas Wolseley was subjected to press criticism for the failures of the War Office before and during the war.

The tactics employed by the British Army during the Boer War have been the subject of much criticism, which can be found elsewhere.[73] Many of the weaknesses revealed by the war had previously been highlighted in Wolseley's report on the 1898 Salisbury manoeuvres, such as the lack of correct use of ground for concealment in the attack and failures to bring artillery to bear at the most appropriate moment. The performance of the cavalry led to a long debate and the details of this can also be found elsewhere.[74] It is however worthy of note that, despite Wolseley's general lack of interest in tactical doctrine during his career, he had supported two advances of importance in the Boer War. One was the use of night marches to bring the offensive force close to the defender without being seen. He had been successful in this area at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir in 1882. Subsequently the British Army had no experience of night marches in war and due to concern about the fitness of the young soldiers and the stress night operations might have on cavalry horses little practice had been made in peacetime except by Wood. In the Drill Book of 1896 Wolseley had encouraged the use of night marches but to little avail. Consequently the night march by Methuen's force on the Boer positions at Modder River was almost as much of an innovation as Wolseley's march in Egypt; but in this case with different results.[75]

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72 Wolseley to George Wolseley, 17 May & 21 Dec. 1900, Duke University

73 Pakenham, passim.

74 E. Childers, War and the Arme Blanche, (London 1910); S. Badsey, 'The British Army and the Arme Blanche 1870-1914', unpublished Ph.D. (Cambridge 1981)

75 Pakenham, p194-200

The Boer War demonstrated the usefulness of mounted infantry and, as has already been described in an earlier chapter, Wolseley was a great advocate of this arm. During the war discussions were re-opened at the War Office on the subject of how to secure a permanent body of mounted infantrymen in the army. Both Wolseley and Lansdowne proposed to institute a system whereby one company within each infantry battalion would be of mounted infantry. Wood disagreed, and in a memorandum in July 1900 argued that such a system would be impossible to maintain on foreign stations because of the lack of space and climate suitable for horses. Wood suggested that each battalion should be increased in size by 140 men to form a separate company so that the bayonet strength would not be reduced. Colonel Lake, the Assistant Quartermaster General, agreed with Wood. Therefore Wolseley reduced his proposal to battalions stationed at home, Egypt and Cyprus although he was keen to consult the Indian authorities on the possibility of setting up a similar scheme there. Lansdowne concluded that further discussions were needed and that a special committee should consider the question. This committee reported after Wolseley had left the War Office.[76]

While Wolseley was in the War Office in the 1880s he had given a great deal of support to the Intelligence Branch. He had been instrumental in securing the post of head of the department for Brackenbury and in securing increased funds for its expansion. Despite Wolseley's support, the Intelligence Department remained short of funds; nevertheless, it functioned remarkably well in the circumstances. It provided accurate assessments of the strength of the Boer armies, the number and type of their armaments and the intentions of their leaders. Lack of funds meant, however, that few maps had been made of South Africa, particularly of the area of the main British advance and this did have a detrimental effect on the performance of the army. Few senior officers in South Africa realised the importance of accurate intelligence, but under Roberts a Field Intelligence Department was set up which later remained as a permanent part of British staff organisation for war.[77]

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76 Wood to Wolseley, 31 July, Lake to Wood, 8 Aug., Wolseley to Lansdowne, 14 Aug. 1900, all in WO32/6829

77 T.G. Fergusson, British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914, (London 1984), pp112, 162

At the end of September 1900 Wolseley was informed that Roberts had been chosen as his successor as Commander-in-Chief. By then Wolseley was keen to retire, as is clear from the letter he wrote to Lansdowne on the subject:

> Of course I shall willingly do what may be considered best for Her Majesty's Service in the matter of staying on for a few weeks longer. But I think it would be more in accordance with custom and would certainly be more agreeable to me to fix the date when I am to retire, say, either the end of November or December, I don't care which. I should not like to stay on by the week.[78]

He had not enjoyed his period of office and believed strongly that the politicians had made his position untenable in peacetime and were unjustly blaming him for the early reverses of the Boer War. Wolseley's imminent retirement re-opened the debate on the position of the Commander-in-Chief and the Queen encouraged Wolseley to set out his case in a memorandum for Salisbury. Wolseley argued that the Commander-in-Chief 'has neither the supreme control exercised by the Secretary of State, nor the administrative functions now conferred on those below him. Between the Ministerial Head on the one hand and the Departmental Heads on the other, he has been crushed out, and the Secretary of State has become the actual Commander-in-Chief of the army'. Wolseley concluded that either the Order in Council of 1895 should be rescinded and 'the army be again placed under a Military Commander, who shall be responsible for its discipline and military training and efficiency', or the post should be abolished since 'it is now merely a high sounding title, with no real responsibility attached to it, and answers no useful military purpose'.[79]

Lansdowne retaliated with a strongly worded memorandum in which he listed the functions the Order in Council had placed on the Commander-in-Chief. He noted that:

> It is remarkable that in his account of the duties which he has been performing during the last five years, the Commander-in-Chief has omitted all reference to mobilisation, to the preparation of schemes of offensive and defensive operations, as well as the important duties to the Department of the Director of Military Intelligence, who, with the Military Secretary, is placed in direct subordination to the Commander-in-Chief.[80]

Lansdowne's argument was that had Wolseley performed all the functions of the Commander-in-Chief his time would have been so filled that it would have been impossible for him to do more.

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78 Wolseley to Lansdowne, 30 Sept. 1900, Maurice Papers, 2/2/47
79 Memo. on the position of the Commander-in-Chief, Wolseley, Nov. 1900, CAB37/53
80 Memo. on the position of the Commander-in-Chief, Lansdowne, 17 Nov. 1900, CAB37/53

He was keen to draw attention to the above-quoted duty of the Commander-in-Chief because this formed the basis for the politicians' argument that the military had not informed them on the strength of the Boers prior to the outbreak of the war. The Under Secretary, Brodrick, was also drawn into the argument. He reduced his comments on Wolseley's memorandum to the level of personal criticism. He alleged that while Wolseley had been seriously ill in January 1897 he had found sufficient energy to work on his biography of Marlborough, and that on his return to the War Office his attention to business had been 'spasmodic' and much of his work had devolved to the Adjutant General.[81]

Roberts was alarmed about the weakness of the functions assigned to the post he was about to occupy, particularly since he had held a much stronger position when Commander-in-Chief in India. At the end of December 1900 he wrote a memorandum on the subject which showed that he was broadly in agreement with Wolseley.[82] The result was that the government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Clinton Dawkins, a member of the Administrative Reform Association, to examine the whole organisation of the War Office and the committee reported in May 1901. It found that the War Office suffered from confusion in administration between the civil and military side, and that there was an absence of clearly defined individual responsibility. The bulk of its recommendations were incorporated in the Order in Council of 4 November 1901 which gave the Commander-in-Chief responsibility for discipline, training, mobilisation and staff planning; the Adjutant General was placed under him. Although the report did criticise Wolseley's preparation of offensive and defensive plans, it was nevertheless a clear victory for Wolseley's side of the dispute on the functions of the Commander-in-Chief.[83] The terms of the 1901 Order in Council became subject to criticism later, and the Esher Committee completely re-organised the War Office and abolished the post of Commander-in-Chief in 1904.

Although the report of the Dawkins Committee was published the general public was made more aware of the arguments between the military and civil sides of the War Office by the debates

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81 Memo. on the position of the Commander-in-Chief, Brodrick, 20 Nov. 1900, CAB37/53
82 Memo. on the role of the Commander-in-Chief, Roberts, 27 Dec. 1900, CAB37/53
83 Hamer, p187-92; Anon, 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief', in Blackwood's, Vol. CLXIX, (April 1901) pp573-84

which took place in the House of Lords on 4 and 5 March 1901. The Earl of Camperdown arranged Wolseley's defence and urged him to be cautious in making a direct attack on a member of the government. In the first debate Wolseley was moderate in his speech whereas Lansdowne replied that 'he thought the main cause of our non-success at the beginning was not the lack of powers of the Commander-in-Chief, but the fitful exercise of those powers'.[84] Camperdown wrote to Wolseley after this debate, 'I believe that L. was entirely misled by your not making any attack on him or on the Government, which shows how wise it was on your part to abstain from any mention of them in your first speech. He expected an attack, and could not help firing off his counter attack'.[85] Wolseley's moderation in refraining from a direct attack on Lansdowne or the Cabinet must have made it easier for the government to adopt the proposals of the Dawkins Committee without a loss of face.

The Elgin Commission had been unjustly critical of Wolseley's role in the preparations for the war in South Africa. The government had known the state of Boer armaments before the 1899 crisis, but both the government and the War Office were taken by surprise by the Boers' tenacity and fighting ability. The events between June and October 1899 demonstrate the depth of distrust between the politicians and the military. The Cabinet so feared that the proposals emanating from the War Office would make war more likely that it both deprived Wolseley of the resources he believed vital for the defence of the British colonies in South Africa, and left him so ignorant of diplomatic negotiations that Wolseley had too little information on which to base offensive plans of operation. The blame for the early reverses of the war must be shared by the Cabinet, for not sending reinforcements in time and not settling the question of the attitude of the Orange Free State; the local authorities in South Africa for attempting to defend too much with too few resources, leading to the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking; and the generals on the spot whose failures led to the siege of Ladysmith and the consequent disruption of Buller's plan of campaign. Wolseley must be criticised for not backing up his numerous memoranda with details from the intelligence reports he had received. Wolseley had underestimated the British military resources

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84 4 & 5 March 1901, Hansard, Vol. XC, 4th series
85 Camperdown to Wolseley, 21 March 1901, WPP

necessary to defeat the Boers but then Britain had never embarked on a war on that scale so far from base before, and Wolseley had no precedent to guide him.

Other aspects of the war show Wolseley in a worse light. He selected the generals in command of divisions and brigades and his choices were often wrong. He had had the overall responsibility for training the British Army since 1895, yet there was room for a vast improvement in British tactics. Wolseley had shown too little interest in the stores of equipment and armaments, which were found to be desperately lacking even for a war of a smaller size and duration. He had concentrated instead on increasing the size of the home establishment and for this at least he must be praised since, although Britain was running out of men late in 1899, the reservoir of men would have been far smaller had Wolseley not fought so hard for the additional battalions and for the maintenance of the Army Reserve.

The Boer War cost over £200 million and required the services of 256,340 officers and men of the regular army, 109,048 auxiliaries, 30,633 from the colonies, and 50-60,000 men raised in South Africa.[86] It appeared to mark the end of an era; reforms in the British Army had been made since 1870 but in 1900 it was clear that many more were to be needed before Britain could face a continental army with confidence. It called into question the value of the reforms made since 1870 and, therefore, implicitly challenged Wolseley's achievements as an army reformer. The justice of these statements forms the theme of the conclusion.

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86 Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p312

Conclusion

During the Crimean War the government had been forced to resort to a number of emergency expedients to increase the size of the army, including the lowering of physical standards for recruits, the employment of eleven Militia regiments in the Mediterranean, the voluntary transfer of approximately 30,000 militiamen to the colours, and the enlistment of foreign legions.[1] The situation at the end of 1900 presented a similar picture. The lowering of physical standards for recruits had begun before the outbreak of the Second Boer War with the enlistment of 'specials'. During the war the services of 32 Militia regiments was proposed, a special law was passed to enable the Volunteers to serve abroad voluntarily, and contingents were sent to South Africa from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Therefore it is quite understandable to view the thirty year period between the Cardwell reforms and the Boer War as a period when the British Army failed to develop into an efficient and effective military force. By extension this suggests that Wolseley was a failure, that he did not reform the army, that the army on his retirement from the War Office was in as bad a state as when he had joined it in 1871.

This is not, however, the best approach to the subject. A final analysis of Wolseley's career at the War Office must address three fundamental questions: did Wolseley succeed in putting across his views but fail to have them acted upon because his methods were at fault? Was Wolseley less successful at the War Office than he had hoped to be, but set the agenda for the future? Or did Wolseley's presence have any effect at all on the reform of the British Army? Wolseley joined the War Office full of enthusiasm for army reform as the Cardwell system was being put into practice. Wolseley was never a root and branch reformer ready to rebuild the British Army from top to bottom; he believed that such thorough reform was no longer necessary: Cardwell had given the army a new organisation, and Wolseley's task was to make it work. Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that throughout his career Wolseley would provide a stout defence of the system as evidence accumulated to reveal its fundamental flaws. He justified his conduct by

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[1] B. Bond, 'Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms, 1858-1868', in J.R.U.S.I. Vol. CVI, No. 622, (May 1961) pp229-41

arguing that the system had never been able to function as its creator intended, and that if the government was prepared to provide the finance to increase the number of battalions at home to balance them with those abroad then all would be well. Wolseley fought this battle unremittingly and was finally successful. Unfortunately the substantial increase in the size of the army came too late in Wolseley's career and too close to the outbreak of the Boer War to determine whether the increase could have solved the problem of the ineffectiveness of the home army.

For all but the final years of Wolseley's career at the War Office he battled against the unswerving conservatism of his superior the Duke of Cambridge. In order to reform the army in the direction he desired, Wolseley frequently undermined the authority of the Duke by appealing directly to the public and his political masters. Wolseley fought the Duke to ensure that the British Army was as modern as possible and capable of facing a variety of enemies anywhere in the world, and this was the subject of chapter 5. He achieved many successes at the time and frequently prepared the ground for further improvements in the future. He chaired the committee which recommended the adoption of a more practical working uniform for the army and, despite his limited interest in tactics, proved an ardent supporter of machine guns and mounted infantry. Wolseley had rather less success in other areas: the Duke resisted all attempts to modernise the drill book, and though revisions were made Wolseley was never satisfied that the army was being adequately trained for the modern battlefield. Wolseley struggled to secure the adoption of a system of selection for all higher regimental and staff appointments against the Duke's opposition. The creation of the Promotion Board in 1890 marked a success for Wolseley but despite its existence personal preference, whether the Duke's or Wolseley's, continued to play an unjustifiably important role in promotion till the end of the century. As Adjutant General Wolseley was instrumental in overseeing the preparation of feasible mobilisation plans, and this was an area which functioned faultlessly in and after October 1899. Wolseley was also a supporter of the Intelligence Department, providing it with capable heads.

Wolseley gained a reputation as a political officer. This was partly because he allied himself with Cardwell against the majority of the officer corps, and partly because his appointment as Adjutant General had been forced upon the Duke by the politicians. Yet Wolseley despised the

politicians for what he viewed as their placing party politics over national interests, and their parsimony. He believed that financial retrenchment damaged the efficiency of the home army and highlighted some areas in which lack of finance made the most impact: the number of battalions at home was not raised to compensate for the increase in those abroad; even had the establishment been increased there was no guarantee that sufficient recruits would come forward to enlist in such a poorly paid army; and finance and the lack of land meant that large scale manoeuvres, essential to train all levels of the army, were not held regularly to the detriment of the army's efficiency in the field.

Wolseley also believed that politicians fundamentally misunderstood the capabilities and requirements of the army. Chapters 6 and 7 have argued that Wolseley, more than most of his contemporaries, realised that the Empire was overextended: Egypt should not have been retained, policy on Indian defence was fundamentally flawed, and insufficient attention was paid to Britain's vulnerability to invasion. Wolseley pressed the government for a statement of the purposes for which the army existed. His efforts were rewarded by the Stanhope Memorandum but he was never totally satisfied with it. At no point did the divergence between military and political interest become more apparent than in the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second Boer War. Chapter 9 has argued that Wolseley was unfairly blamed for the early reverses suffered in that war. The war provided the shock that Wolseley felt Britain needed. He wrote to General Sir Edward Hutton in 1902,

> Everyone is delighted that the war is over and I hope it may result in inducing those who rule England to set our Army and Navy in good order. They have had heaps of warning to do so for many years backed by those who were best entitled to advise them, but politicians are the same all over the world. They will spend nothing in peace, and when war comes try to throw all the blame for unpreparedness upon the soldiers and sailors who have been vainly trying to make them spend money on those two fine services.[2]

After Wolseley's retirement from the War Office many of his opinions were more widely accepted: there was a major reappraisal of Britain's strategic interests and a reorganisation of her military and naval resources, and the Committee of Imperial Defence was set up with the intention of achieving greater co-operation between the politicians and their military advisers.

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[2] Wolseley to Hutton, 5 June 1902, in Muenger, p132

Wolseley entered the War Office full of energy and enthusiasm for army reform and left it a bitterly disappointed man. A great deal of the blame for this rests on Wolseley himself: his ambition, competitiveness, and intolerance of opposing opinions. There was a rivalry between Wolseley and Roberts which centred around Wolseley's defence of the Cardwell system. Whereas Roberts argued that the efficiency of the army was being sacrificed to create an Army Reserve, Wolseley believed that India's greed for soldiers, which denuded the home cadres of virtually all their trained men, was to blame. Chapter 3 has shown that Wolseley was ready to accept the idea that India did need troops for a longer period of service than laid down by Cardwell and Childers, and had he not seen Roberts as a threat to his own position he might have been more willing to make his opinions public. Wolseley's clashes with the Duke were justified on the grounds that the Duke, if given a free hand, would have thwarted all efforts towards the modernisation of the British Army. But Wolseley's conduct towards Lansdowne has little justification. Chapter 8 has shown that Wolseley was a disappointment as Commander-in-Chief and that Wolseley's resentment at the redrawing of his area of responsibilities angered and depressed him so much that his lack of sympathy with Lansdowne damaged the cause of reform during these years. More needs to be written on Lansdowne's period as Secretary of State for War,[3] but there is ample evidence to suggest that had Wolseley's personality been more amenable towards politicians the two men would have made great advances in the cause of army reform. Lansdowne was better able than many of his predecessors to request additions to the Estimates, and obtained sanction for a substantial increase to the establishment, and a loan for military works. Yet Wolseley never showed the slightest gratitude.

Chapter 2 examined how Wolseley brought the cause of army reform into the public forum. His use of publicity was highly controversial and he received many reprimands from the Duke and Secretaries of State for War. Yet Wolseley was justified in his conduct: as Amery wrote,

> An army which is absolutely subordinate to the civil power, which is a mere instrument of the national will, can only be efficient if the nation is determined to

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[3] The Lansdowne papers are still closed to researchers.

> insist upon efficiency. It is absurd to blame the Army for not having the military interests of the nation at heart if the nation itself is indifferent to those interests.

Wolseley achieved limited successes in his use of publicity: backed by the public, he played a prominent role in blocking the construction of the Channel Tunnel, and he manipulated the perception of the state of French politics in order to create invasion scares in 1887-8: this arousal of public opinion led to a minor increase in army expenditure but a major increase in naval construction. Wolseley also attempted to make the army more popular within society in the hope that better educated men would enlist. There is little evidence to show any great success in this particular area while Wolseley was at the War Office, but, nevertheless, the ease of recruitment for the Imperial Yeomanry during the Boer War and the flood of recruits in August 1914 demonstrate that Wolseley had finally got the message across that military service was socially acceptable.

Wolseley left the War Office a disappointed man because he believed that he could have done more to reform the army. The obstacles to his success had been virtually insurmountable and yet until ill health undermined his abilities he had battled unremittingly for the cause of army reform. His greatest achievement was to prepare the ground for further reforms and to suggest the directions they should take once the public and politicians accepted the necessity. Therefore Lord Midleton, who had been Secretary of State for War as Brodrick from 1900 to 1903, was quite correct when he wrote to Evelyn Wood in 1918 that 'When history is written I feel that the Army of Mons will be ascribed to Lord Wolseley, yourself and his other comrades, who first broke down the old gang...'.[4] Whatever his faults and failings, it must be concluded that Wolseley was *the* leading reformer at the War Office in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century and that without his efforts the British Army in 1900 would have been even less prepared to meet the challenge of the war in South Africa.

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[4] Midleton to Wood, 16 Feb. 1918, Wood Papers, Duke University

Appendix I - Outline of Sir Garnet Wolseley's Career

4 June 1833	Garnet Wolseley born in Ireland the eldest of seven children. Son of an army officer.
12 March 1852	Commissioned as an Ensign into the 12th East Suffolk Regiment.
13 April 1852	Transfers to 80th Staffordshire Regiment.
1852-3	Fights in the **Second Burmese War**. Wounded. Mentioned in despatches.
16 May 1853	Promoted to Lieutenant in the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry.
15 November 1854	Leaves for **Crimean War**. Temporary appointment as Acting Engineer before Sebastopol. Wounded several times and loses the sight of his right eye. Appointed D.A.Q.M.G. on the staff of the Light Infantry. Mentioned several times in despatches.
16 January 1855	Promoted to Captain.
Autumn 1856	Returns to England and stationed at Aldershot and Chatham.
April 1857	Sent to India with regiment. **Indian Mutiny**. Present at the siege and capture of Lucknow. Then D.A.Q.M.G. to Hope Grant's division. Frequent mentions in despatches.
24 March 1858	Promoted to Major.
26 April 1859	Promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel.
1860	**Second Chinese War**. D.A.Q.M.G. on staff of Hope Grant. Present at all engagements.
December 1861	Leaves for Canada as Assistant Quartermaster-General.
Late 1862	Visits Lee's headquarters during the American Civil War.
1865	Made Commandant of La Prairie training school, near Montreal.
5 June 1865	Promoted to Colonel.
September 1867	Appointed Deputy Quartermaster-General.
1868	Receives two months leave. Returns to England and marries Louisa

Erskine.

1870 Commands the **Red River Expedition** to Fort Garry. Made a Knight of St Michael and St George.

October 1870 Returns to England.

1 May 1871 Appointed **Assistant Adjutant General**.

October 1871 Chief of the Staff to Sir Charles Staveley at manoeuvres.

October 1872 On the staff of Sir John Michael at manoeuvres.

September 1873 Leaves England to command the **Ashanti Campaign**.

February 1874 Reaches Kumasi.

March 1874 Returns to England. Receives Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George, and the KCB. Parliament makes a grant of £25,000. Promoted to Major-General, backdated to 6 March 1868.

1 April 1874 Appointed **Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces**.

February 1875 Appointed **High Commissioner in Natal**.

October 1875 Resumes appointment as Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces.

October 1876 Seconded to **Council of the Secretary of State for India**.

25 March 1878 Promoted to Lieutenant-General.

July 1878 Appointed **High Commissioner for Cyprus**.

April 1879 Recalled to England.

June 1879 Appointed **High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of Natal and the Transvaal**. Captures Cetewayo. End of Zulu War.

November 1879 **Sekukuni Campaign**.

May 1880 Returns to England.

1 July 1880 Appointed **Quartermaster General**.

1 April 1882 Appointed **Adjutant General**.

July 1882 Appointed to command **expedition to Egypt**.

September 1882 Tel-el-Kebir. Receives thanks of both Houses of Parliament. Awarded GCB and GCMG. Raised to peerage.

18 November 1882	Promoted to General.
1883	Accompanies the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh to Russia for the coronation of Tsar Alexander III.
1884	Appointed to command the **Sudan expedition** to rescue Gordon in Khartoum.
February 1885	Khartoum falls and Gordon killed.
April 1885	Returns to England. Raised to Viscountcy.
1886	Represents the Queen at the Jubilee of Kaiser William I.
1889	Visits the battlefields of the Franco-Prussian War.
1 October 1890	Appointed **Commander-in-Chief of Ireland**.
Summer 1894	Visits the Crimean battlefields.
26 May 1894	Made a Field-Marshal.
1 November 1895	Appointed **Commander-in-Chief of the British Army**.
30 November 1900	Retires from the British Army.
1910	Announces accession of King Edward VII to courts of Austria, Roumania, Serbia, Greece, and Turkey.
26 March 1913	Dies in France. Buried in England in St Paul's Cathedral.

Publications

1. Books

Narrative of the War in China, (1862)

The Soldier's Pocket Book for Field Service, 5 editions, (1869-89)

The Field Pocket Book for Auxiliary Forces, (1873)

The Use of Railroads in War, Pamphlet, (1873)

The Life of John, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1702), 2 Vols. (1894)

The Decline and Fall of Napoleon, (1895)

The Story of a Soldier's Life, 2 Vols. (1903)

2. Articles

'A Month's Visit to Confederate Headquarters', Blackwoods, Vol. XCIII, No. 568, (Jan. 1863) pp 1-29

'Narrative of the Red River Expedition - Parts 1-3, Blackwoods, Vols. 108-109, (Dec. 1870-Feb. 1871)

'Our Military Requirements', Macmillans, Vol. XXIII, (April 1871) pp 524-36

'Our Autumn Manoeuvres', Blackwoods, Vol. CXII, No. 685, (Nov. 1872) pp 627-44

'Our Coming Guest', Blackwoods, Vol. CXIII, No. 692, (June 1873) pp 712-21

'Army Reform', Macmillans, Vol. XXXV, (April 1877), pp 496-504

'France as a Military Power in 1870 and in 1878', Nineteenth Century, Vol. III, No. XI, (Jan. 1878) pp 1-21

'Military Staff Systems Abroad and in England', Macmillans, Vol. XXXVII, (Feb. 1878), pp 323-335

'England as a Military Power in 1854 and in 1878', Nineteenth Century, Vol. III, No. 13 (March 1878) pp 433-56

'Letter from Cyprus', Macmillans, Vol. XXXIX, (Nov. 1878), p 96

'Long and Short Service', Nineteenth Century, Vol. IX, No. 49, (March 1881) pp 558-72

'General Lee', Macmillans, Vol. LV, (March 1887), pp 321-31

'Courage', Fortnightly Review Vol. XLIV, No. 260, (August 1888) pp 279-92

'Military Genius', Fortnightly Review Vol. XLIV, No. 261, (Sept. 1888) pp 297-312

'The Negro as a Soldier', Fortnightly Review Vol. XLIV, No. 264, (Dec. 1888) pp 689-703

'War', Fortnightly Review Vol. XLV, No. 265, (Jan. 1888) pp 1-17

'Is a Soldier's Life Worth Living?', Fortnightly Review Vol. XLV, No. 269, (May 1889) pp 597-609

'The French Revolution and War', Fortnightly Review Vol. LV, No. 270, (June 1889) pp 780-91

'An English View of the Civil War', North American Review, Vol. CXLIX, No. 391-7, (June-Dec. 1889)

'The Standing Army of Great Britain', Harpers New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LXXX, No. 477, (Feb. 1890) pp 331-47

'The Study of War', United Services Magazine, Vol. 2, (1890) pp 481-93

'General Sherman', United Services Magazine, Vol. 3, (1891)

'General Forrest', United Services Magazine, Vol. 5, (1892)

'Memoir of Sir Hope Grant', United Services Magazine, Vol. 7, No. 774, (1893) p777

'War and Civilisation', United Services Magazine, Vol. 15, (1897)

Appendix II - The Civil Side of the War Office

Date	Secretary of State	Under-Secretary	Financial Secretary	Permanent Under-Secretary
1871	E. Cardwell	Lord Northbrook	J.C. Vivian	Lieut-Gen Sir E. Lugard
1872			H. Campbell	J.C. Vivian
1873		Marquis of Lansdowne		
1874			H. Campbell-Bannerman	
1875	G. Gathorne Hardy	Earl of Pembroke	Capt. F.A. Stanley	
1876		Earl of Cadogan		
1878			Lieut.-Col. R.J. Loyd-Lindsay	
1879	Col. F.A. Stanley	Viscount Bury		R.W. Thompson
1881	H.C.E. Childers	Earl of Morley	H. Campbell-Bannerman	
Dec. 1882	Marquis of Hartington		A.D. Hayter	
June 1885 - Feb. 1886	W.H. Smith	Viscount Bury	H. Stafford Northcote	
Feb. - Aug. 1886	H. Campbell-Bannerman			
Aug. 1886 - Jan. 1887	W.H. Smith	Lord Harris	W.F. Brodrick	
1887	E. Stanhope			
1890		Earl Brownlow		
1892	H. Campbell-Bannerman	Lord Sandhurst	W. Woodall	
1895	Marquis of Lansdowne	W.F. Brodrick	J. Powell Williamson	A.L. Haliburton
1897				R.H. Knox
1898		G. Wyndham		

The Military Side of the War Office

Date	Adjutant-General	Quarter-master-General	Inspector-General of Recruiting	Director of Ordnance	Intelligence Department
1871	Lieut.-Gen. Sir R. Airey	Maj.-Gen. F.P. Haines	Maj.-Gen. C.A. Edwards	Maj.-Gen. Sir H. Storks	
1872		Maj.-Gen. C.H. Ellice			
1873			Maj.-Gen. R.C.H. Taylor	Lieut.-Col. Lord Eustace	Maj.-Gen. P.L. MacDougall
1877		Maj.-Gen. D. Lysons	Maj.-Gen. E.A. Whitmore		
1880		Lieut.-Gen. G.J. Wolseley	Maj.-Gen. E.G. Bulwer		Maj.-Gen. A. Alison
1881				Lieut.-Gen. J.M. Adye	
1882	General G.J. Wolseley	Lieut.-Gen. A.J. Herbert			
1884				H.R. Brand	Col. A.S. Cameron
1886		General A.J. Herbert		G.C. Dawnay	Maj.-Gen. H. Brackenbury
1887		Maj.-Gen. R.H. Buller	Maj.-Gen. R. Biddulph	H.S. Northcote	
1888			Lieut.-Gen. R. Biddulph		
1889			Maj.-Gen. J.H. Rocke	Post abolished	
1890	Lieut.-Gen. R.H. Buller	Lieut.-Gen. T.D. Baker	Lieut.-Gen. W.H.A. Feilding		Maj.-Gen. E.F. Chapman
1893		Lieut.-Gen. E. Wood			
1896				Lieut.-Gen. E. Markham	Lieut.-Gen. E.F. Chapman
1897					Col. J.C. Ardagh
1898	General E. Wood	General R. Harrison			
1899		Lieut.-Gen. G.S. White		Lieut.-Gen. H. Brackenbury	
1900		Lieut.-Gen. C. Mansfield-Clarke			

Source: The Army Lists: 1870-1900

Appendix III - Short Biographies

	Secretaries of State for War	Prime Ministers
Dec. 1868 - Feb. 1874	Edward Cardwell	William Gladstone
Feb. 1874 - March 1878	Gathorne Hardy	Benjamin Disraeli
April 1878 - April 1880	Col. F.A. Stanley	
April 1880 - Dec. 1882	Hugh Childers	William Gladstone
Dec. 1882 - June 1885	Marquess of Hartington	
June 1885 - Feb. 1886	W.H. Smith	Marquess of Salisbury
Feb. - Aug. 1886	Henry Campbell-Bannerman	William Gladstone
Aug. 1886 - Jan. 1887	W.H. Smith	Marquess of Salisbury
Jan. 1887 - Aug. 1892	Edward Stanhope	
Aug. 1892 - June 1895	Henry Campbell-Bannerman	Earl of Rosebery
June 1895 - Nov. 1900	Marquess of Lansdowne	Marquess of Salisbury

Principal Characters

Adye, John (1819-1900), brigade major of artillery in Turkey, 1854; served at defence of Cawnpore, 1857; Deputy Adjutant General of artillery in India, 1863-6; Governor of Military Academy, Woolwich, 1875; Chief of Staff under Wolseley in Egypt, 1882; Governor of Gibraltar, 1882-6.

Alison, Archibald, (1826-1907), served at Sebastopol, 1855; wounded in second relief of Lucknow, 1857; served in Ashanti War, 1873-4; commanded Highland Brigade at Tel-el-Kebir,

1882; commanded force in Egypt, 1883; in command of Aldershot division, 1883-8; member of India Council, 1889-99.

Ardagh, John, (1840-1907), Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General for intelligence at War Office, 1876; sent to Constantinople to report on its defence, 1876; reported on Montenegrin and Bulgarian defences; at Congress of Berlin, 1878; British commissioner for delimitation of Turco-Greek frontier, 1881; in charge of Intelligence Department, Egypt, 1882; restored Alexandria after its bombardment; present at battles of Tel-el-Kebir and El Teb; Commandant at Cairo during Gordon relief expedition, 1884; Assistant Adjutant General for defence at War Office, 1887; Private Secretary to Viceroy, 1888-94; Director of Military Intelligence, 1896-1901.

Arnold-Forster, Hugh, (1855-1909), secretary of Imperial Federation League and advocate of naval efficiency, 1884; Unionist MP, 1892-1909; wrote much on army questions, 1892-1900; Secretary of the Admiralty, 1900; Secretary of State for War, 1903-5; reorganised War Office.

Baring, Evelyn, first earl of Cromer (1841-1917), went out to Cairo as first British commissioner of *Caisse de la Dette* created to deal with liabilities of Khedive Ismail, 1877; resigned, 1879; on deposition of Ismail and succession of Tewfik appointed British controller in Egypt, 1879; financial member of Viceroy's council, 1880-83; British agent and consul-general in Egypt, 1883-1907; created Baron Cromer, 1892; viscount, 1899; earl, 1901.

Bigge, Arthur, (1840-1931), assistant private secretary to Queen Victoria, 1880-95; private secretary, 1895-1901.

Brackenbury, Henry (1837-1914), accompanied Wolseley to Ashanti, 1873, Cyprus, 1878, Zululand, 1879, and Egypt, 1884; Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General and head of Intelligence Department, 1886-91; Military Member of Viceroy's Council, 1891-96; Director General of Ordnance, 1899-1902.

Brodrick, St John, ninth Viscount Midleton (1856-1942), Conservative MP 1880-1906; Financial Secretary at War Office, 1886-92; Under Secretary for War, 1895-98; Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1898-1900; Secretary of State for War, 1900-03.

Buller, Redvers (1839-1908), accompanied Wolseley on Red River expedition, 1870; chief intelligence officer on Ashanti campaign, 1873-4; commanded Frontier Light Horse in Sixth Kaffir War in South Africa, 1878-9; VC, June 1879; Chief of Staff to Wood in South Africa, 1881; chief of intelligence staff in Egypt, 1882; commanded first infantry brigade at El Teb and Tamai under Sir Gerald Graham, 1884; Chief of Staff in Gordon relief expedition, 1884; Adjutant General, 1890-97; Aldershot command, 1898; Commander-in-Chief, Boer War, 1899; commander in Natal, 1900.

Butler, William (1838-1910), accompanied Wolseley on Red River expedition, 1870; Ashanti campaign, 1873-4; special service in Natal, 1875; served in Zulu war, 1879; Egypt campaign, 1882; in charge of provision of boats for Gordon relief expedition, 1884; commanded garrison at Alexandria, 1890; in command of brigade at Aldershot, 1893; transferred to South East district, 1896; commanded troops in South Africa, 1898-99; command of Western district, 1899-1905.

Cambridge, Duke of (1819-1904), commanded division in Crimea and present at Alma and Inkerman, 1854; General Commanding in Chief 1856-87; Commander-in-Chief, 1887-1895.

Campbell-Bannerman, Henry (1836-1908), MP, 1868-1908; Financial Secretary to War Office, 1871-74 and 1880-82; Secretary to the Admiralty, 1882-84; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1884-85; Secretary of State for War, Feb.-June 1886; in favour of Home Rule; Secretary of State for War, 1892-95; Prime Minister, 1906-08.

Cardwell, Edward (1813-1886), MP; Secretary of State for War, 1868-74.

Chapman, Edward (1840-1926), Military Secretary to Commander-in-Chief India, 1881-5; Quartermaster General India, 1885-9; Director of Military Intelligence, 1891-6; G.O.C. Scotland, 1896-1901

Childers, Hugh (1827-1896), MP; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1868; Secretary of State for War, 1880-82; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1882-85.

Colley, George (1835-1881), lieutenant-colonel in Ashanti campaign, 1873-74; visited Natal and the Transvaal, 1875; Secretary to the Viceroy, 1876; Chief of Staff in Zulu war, 1879; major-general and governor of Natal, 1880; killed at Majuba Hill in Jan. 1881.

Connaught, Duke of, (1850-1942), third son of Queen Victoria; commanded 1st brigade in Egypt, 1882; commanded in Bombay, 1886-90; Portsmouth command, 1890-93; Aldershot, 1893-98; Ireland, 1900-04.

Dilke, Charles (1843-1911), MP 1868-86 and 1892-1911; radical and prolific author particularly on social reform and military subjects.

Esher, Viscount (1852-1930), private secretary to Hartington, 1878-85; Liberal MP, 1880-85; member of Elgin Commission, 1902; chairman of War Office Reconstruction Committee, 1903-04.

Gathorne-Hardy, Gathorne, first earl of Cranbrook (1814-1906), MP; Secretary of State for War, 1874-78; Secretary for India, 1878.

Gordon, Charles (1833-1885), served in Crimean war, 1855; served in Chinese war, 1860-62; appointed to command Chinese forces against the Taipings, 1863-4; governor of equatorial

provinces (Egypt), 1874-76; governor-general of the Sudan and equatorial provinces, 1877; succeeded in ending slave trade in region; secretary to Viceroy, 1880; sent to Sudan to bring out Khartoum garrison, 1884; besieged in Khartoum and murdered in Jan. 1885.

Haliburton, Arthur (1832-1907), joined commissariat department of British Army, 1855; served in Crimea and Canada; civilian assistant director of supplies and transports, 1869; director, 1879; Permanent Under Secretary for war, 1895-97.

Hamley, Edward (1824-1893), served in Crimea, 1854; professor of military history at Sandhurst, 1859-64; published Operations of War (1866); member of Council for Military Education, 1866-70; commandant of staff college, 1870-77; commanded division in Egypt, 1882, later embroiled in argument with Wolseley of role played by the division; MP 1885 and 1886-93; active in home defence debates.

Hartington, Marquess (1833-1908), MP 1857-91; Under Secretary of State for War, 1863; Secretary of State for War, 1866; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1870-74; Secretary of State for India, 1880-82; Secretary of State for War, 1882-85; opposed Home Rule; chairman of Royal Commission on administration of military and naval departments, 1888-90; succeeded father as Duke of Devonshire, 1892; chairman of Cabinet Defence Committee, 1895-1900.

Lansdowne, Marquess (1845-1927), Under Secretary of State for War, 1872-74; Under Secretary for India, 1880; Governor-general of Canada, 1883-88; Viceroy of India, 1888-94; Secretary of State for War, 1895-1900; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1900-05.

MacDougall, Patrick (1819-1894), served in Canada, 1844-54; superintendent of studies at Sandhurst, 1854-58; served in Crimea, 1854-55; Adjutant General of Canadian Militia, 1865-69; Deputy Inspector-general of auxiliary forces at War Office, 1871; head of Intelligence Branch, 1873-78.

Maurice, John (1841-1912), served in Ashanti, South Africa, Egypt, and the Sudan under Wolseley; professor of military art and history at Staff College, 1885; commanded artillery, Woolwich district, 1895; prolific writer on military subjects and edited first two volumes of official History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902 (1906-07).

Ponsonby, Henry (1825-1895), served in the Crimea; Private Secretary to Queen Victoria, 1870-95.

Roberts, Frederick (1832-1914), served in Indian Mutiny, 1857; won VC in 1858; Assistant Quartermaster General on Abyssinian expedition, 1867-68; Quartermaster General of army in India, 1875; commander of Punjab Frontier Force, 1878; commanded force in Afghan war, 1878-80; Commander-in-Chief of Madras Army, 1880; Commander-in-Chief in India, 1885-93; Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, 1895-99; appointed to supreme command in South Africa, 1900; Commander-in-Chief of British Army, 1900-05.

Smith, William Henry (1825-1891), MP; First Lord of Admiralty, 1877; Secretary of State for War, June 1885-Feb. 1886 and Aug. 1886-Jan. 1887; First Lord of Treasury and leader of House of Commons, 1886.

Stanhope, Edward (1840-1893), MP; Under Secretary of State for India, 1878-80; President of Board of Trade, 1885; Colonial Secretary, 1886; Secretary of State for War, 1887-92.

Stanley, Frederick, sixteenth earl of Derby (1841-1908), in Grenadier Guards, 1858-65; Conservative MP, 1865-1886; Secretary of State for War, 1878-80; Colonial Secretary, 1885-6; succeeded to earldom, 1893.

Wilkinson, Spenser (1853-1937), active military historian and journalist; leader writer, Manchester Guardian, 1882-92; Morning Post, 1895-1914; Chichele professor of military history, Oxford, 1909-23.

Wood, Evelyn (1838-1919), entered navy, 1854; transferred to army during Crimean War; won VC in Indian Mutiny; special service officer under Wolseley in Ashanti campaign, 1873-74; served in Zulu War, 1878-79; sent to Natal in 1881 to oversee settlement with Boers after war; served under Wolseley in Egypt, 1882; first British Sirdar of Egyptian Army, 1882; Eastern command, 1886; Aldershot command, 1889; Quartermaster General, 1893-97; Adjutant General 1897-1900

Appendix IV - Establishments and Recruitment

Year		Cavalry	R.A.[1]	R.E.	Foot Guards	Infantry	Total[2]
1875	**Establishment**	16,060	34,458	5,627	5,633	116,727	186,432
	Home	12,075	19,418	4,020	5,633	49,957	96,279
	Recruitment	2,281	4,513	475	571	12,057	20,640
1877	**Establishment**	16,547	35,294	5,698	5,853	118,704	190,015
	Home	11,754	18,458	4,023	5,853	54,568	99,991
	Recruitment	------	-------	------	-----	------[3]	28,727
1879	**Establishment**	16,203	35,106	6,001	5,940	120,359	191,933
	Home	11,344	17,990	3,743	5,940	50,915	95,183
	Recruitment	------	-------	------	------	-------	29,102
1881	**Establishment**	15,903	33,630	5,568	5,990	119,235	188,958
	Home	10,929	15,951	3,703	5,990	49,136	91,162
	Recruitment	1,388	3,863	402	618	19,175	26,258
1883	**Establishment**	15,657	33,007	5,625	5,697	124,021	193,397
	Home	9,905	15,897	3,821	5,697	54,294	94,885
	Recruitment	3,036	4,022	565	1,727	22,464	33,096
1885	**Establishment**	15,951	31,908	5,701	6,232	119,583	188,657
	Home	9,312	15,512	3,378	5,913	48,914	87,999
	Recruitment	3,519	5,754	1,138	1,104	26,711	39,971
1887	**Establishment**	18,122	34,267	6,272	5,861	133,906	208,357
	Home	11,315	16,769	4,509	5,861	57,459	102,197
	Recruitment	2,769	4,974	1,005	1,266	19,626	31,225
1889	**Establishment**	17,851	35,128	6,764	5,691	135,404	211,030
	Home	11,316	17,827	5,116	5,691	56,420	103,047
	Recruitment	2,551	5,569	945	1,207	17,702	29,401
1891	**Establishment**	17,600	35,557	7,305	5,517	133,557	210,499
	Home	11,139	17,533	5,350	4,900	58,551	104,591
	Recruitment	3,606	4,961	811	1,604	22,980	36,003

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[1] The figures for the Artillery are the totals of the Royal Horse Artillery, the Field Artillery, the Garrison Artillery, and the Mountain Artillery.
[2] These figures are the total of all branches of the British Army, including those branches not listed here.
[3] The breakdown of the recruitment figures for 1877 and 1879 was not found in the Reports of the Inspector General for Recruiting.

Date		Cavalry	R.A.	R.E.	Foot Guards	Infantry	Total
1893	**Establishment**	18,780	36,611	7,530	6,111	135,293	217,789
	Home	12,113	18,231	5,449	6,111	58,632	107,904
	Recruitment	3,086	5,645	661	1,101	23,266	35,195
1895	**Establishment**	18,356	37,236	7,591	5,948	138,897	222,151
	Home	11,095	17,358	5,476	5,948	60,098	107,810
	Recruitment	2,387	4,552	915	1,173	19,153	29,583
1897	**Establishment**	18,406	37,013	7,829	5,851	136,965	220,869
	Home	10,582	16,223	5,555	5,851	54,371	100,641
	Recruitment	2,426	6,357	817	2,062	21,037	35,015
1899	**Establishment**	18,102	39,423	7,975	7,249	141,332	231,851
	Home	10,378	17,572	5,351	6,275	58,791	106,686
	Recruitment	4,793	7,152	1,402	2,155	22,741	42,700

Source: General Annual Returns of the Army: c.1633 (1876) XLIII, c.2170 (1878) XLVII, c.2731 (1880) XLII, c.3405 (1882) XXXVIII, c.4184 (1884) XLVIII, c.4829 (1886) XL, c.5531 (1888) LXVI, c.6196 (1890) XLIII, c.6722 (1892) L, c.7483 (1894) LIII, c.8225 (1896) LI, c.8982 (1898) LIV, c.9426 (1900) LIII; Reports of the Inspector General of Recruiting: c.1435 (1876) XV, c.1945 (1878) XIX, c.2241 (1878-9) XV, c.3169 (1882) XVI c.3911 (1884) XVII, c.4677 (1886) XIII, c.5302 (1888) XIX, c.5953 (1890) XIX, c.6597 (1892) XX, c.7291 (1893-4) XVI, c.7980 (1896) XVIII, c.8770 (1898) XIII cd.110 (1900) X

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